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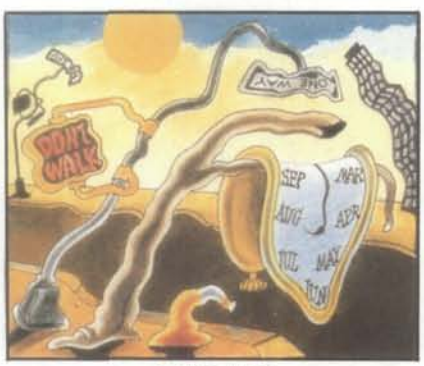

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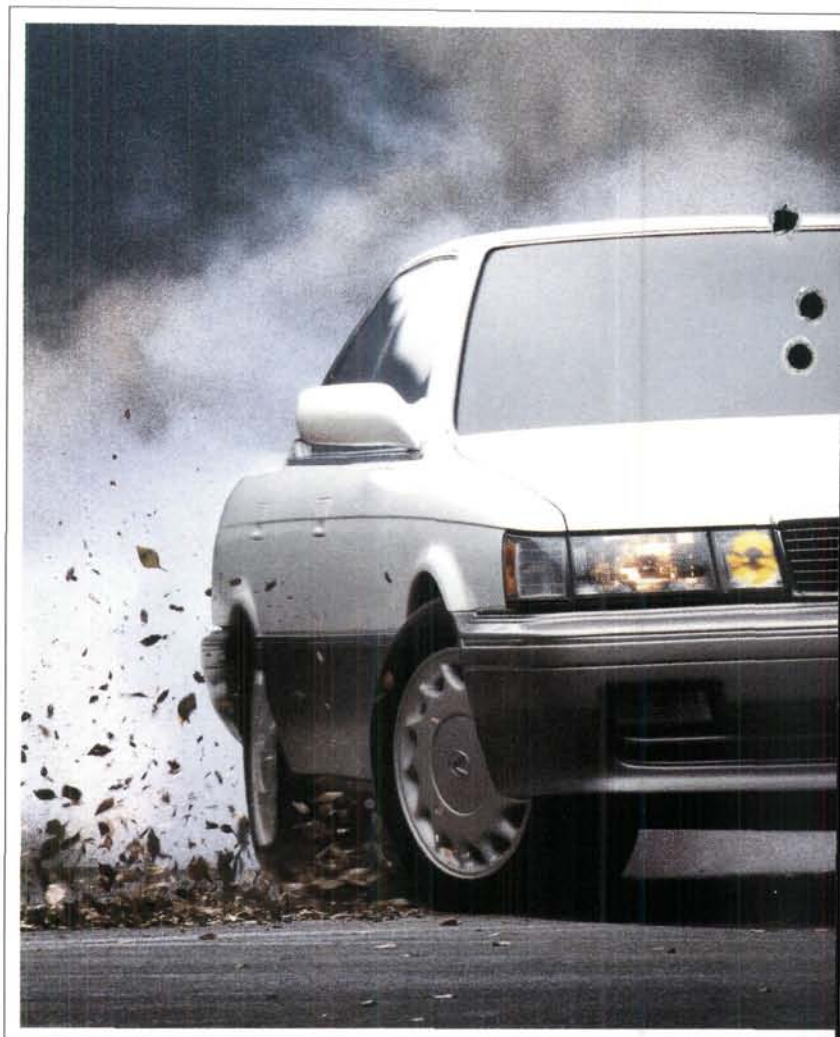

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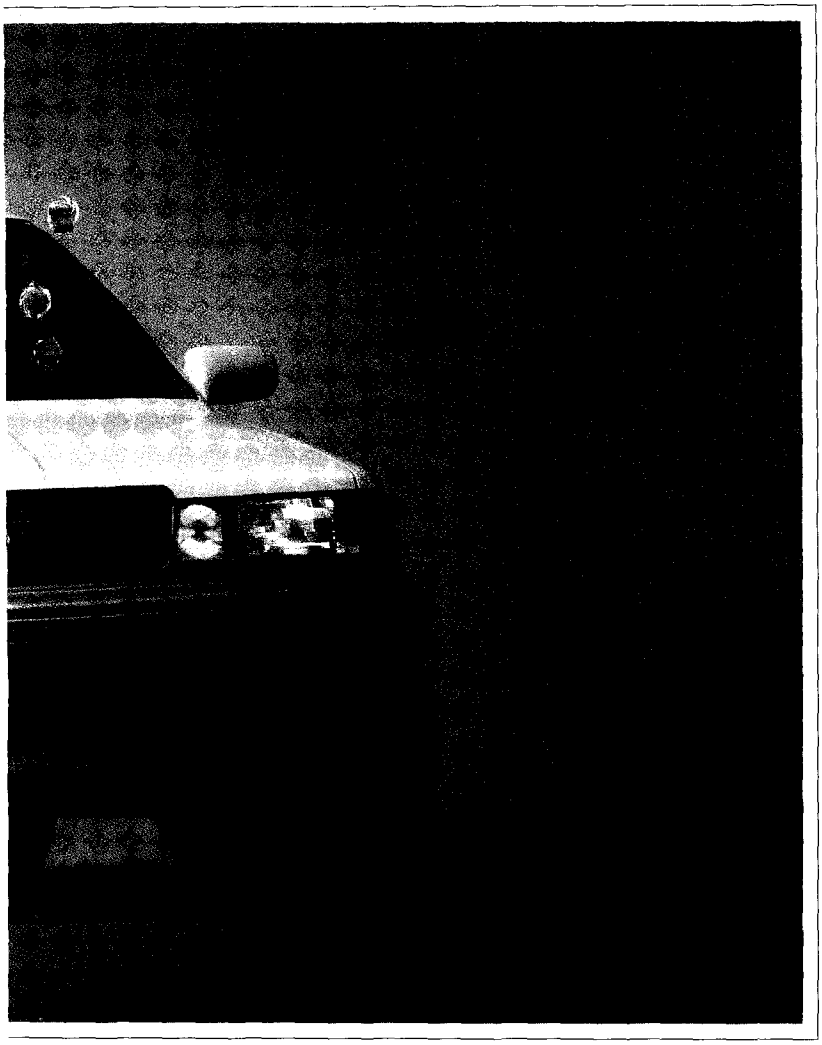

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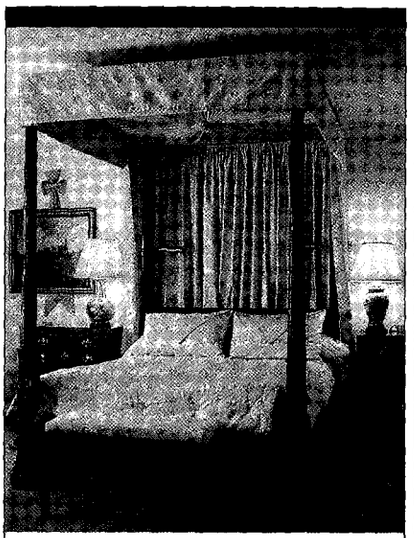

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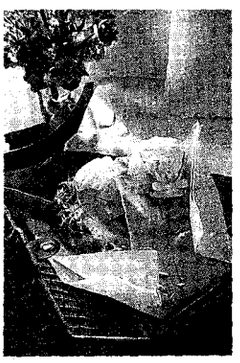

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When desperate men marched on Washington

1932 was the darkest year of the Great Depression. Factories closed, soup kitchens fed thousands, shantytowns sprang up. In the South, farms failed and families starved. Unemployment hit a staggering 25 percent.

Finally, a desperate army of World War I veterans and their families marched on Washington to claim the cash bonuses they had been promised by Congress. Twenty thousand people set up camps on President Hoover's doorstep. The clash between federal troops and the "Bonus Army" guaranteed the collapse of Hoover's administration and paved the way for the meteoric rise of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

FOR a musical performer to move what is essentially a cabaret act to a legitimate theatre would seem to be an uncomplicated process. A small house has hardly more seats than a large night club, and the target audiences are presumably similar. How odd, then, that so few singers have made the transition successfully of late. Julie Wilson was one of the lucky ones, a few seasons back, with the Sondheim/Weill show she brought to the Kaufman. Of course she pulled it off, one reflects: she already had an extensive background in musical comedy. But such experience guarantees nothing—witness the disappointing leap back to legit by Barbara Cook that same year, to say nothing of the failures of many other gifted performers since. These failures may have less to do with any shortcoming of the artist than with an uneasiness on the part of the audience. In the theatre one sits politely, with hands folded, keeping kind or cutting remarks to oneself. In a night club you can share comments with your companions, and this chitchat, combined with the performer's patter, seems to create a single current of conversation.

Alcohol is part of a cabaret's flow, too, of course, and it is no slight to the modest yet assured talents of Daugherty & Field, the musical duo currently appearing at the Double Image Theatre, to say that we might have enjoyed them more with a drink in hand. In a cabaret their program—which includes a big-band-era tribute, a radio-days remembrance, and dozens of show tunes—might have seemed more forgivable and less familiar. And we're talking *familiar:* "Over the Rainbow"; "Chattanooga Choo Choo"; a (spoken) rendition of "Who's on First." Except for the Abbott and Costello bit, the between-songs clowning, actually, was the most enjoyable aspect of the evening. Imitating Alice Ghostley, Bill Daugherty (the younger, cornier half of the team) initiated the show's wittiest exchange, though Robin Field, his piano-playing partner, got to deliver the punch line—as Paul Lynde.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

Assassins—A new musical by Stephen Sondheim (score and lyrics) and John Weidman (book); directed by Jerry Zaks. The cast includes Victor Garber, Annie Golden, Jonathan Hadary, Terrence Mann, and Debra Monk. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

A Bright Room Called Day—Frances Conroy, Reno, and Marian Seldes lead the cast in a play by Tony Kushner. Previews through Jan. 6. Opens Jan. 7 at 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

The Country Girl—A revival of Clifford Odets' play, with Karen Allen, David Rasche, and Paul McCrane. Staged by Kenneth Frankel. In previews. (Roundabout, 100 E. 17th St. 420-1883.)

Taking Stock—Lee Wallace and George Guidall in a comedy by Richard Schotter. In previews. (Jewish Repertory Theatre, 344 E. 14th St. 505-2667.)

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RECENTLY OPENED

The American Plan—Richard Greenberg's new *comédie larmoyante,* set in the Catskills, is about a lonely, unbalanced young woman who meets and falls in love with an attractive young man who will ultimately betray her. It plays like the work of someone who saw "Dirty Dancing," "Now, Voyager," and "The Heiress" a few too many times and didn't understand what was good about any of them. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/31/90.) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Closes Jan. 18.)

Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story—Anyone who thinks that rock and roll lives on had better steer clear of this ersatz docu-musical about the life of Buddy Holly. (11/19/90) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Camille, A Tearjerker—Everett Quinton and the late Charles Ludlam are both at their best in this revival of Mr. Ludlam's 1973 spoof, which gives Mr. Quinton a chance to "play the whore" on a grand scale. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, 1 Sheridan Square. 691-2271.)

Circle Repertory Company—Presenting **Love diatribe.** A young man goes to his parents' house for dinner and is so overcome by depression at what he finds there that he gradually becomes immobile. Harry Kondoleon's latest is just the right length, just the right breadth, with just the right degree of zaniness, and *with something real at its core—in short, the* perfect Off Broadway play. (12/31/90) (99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100. Closes Jan. 13.)

Daugherty & Field Off-Broadway—The cabaret team of Bill Daugherty and Robin Field in a revue of swing and show tunes. (Double Image Theatre, 15 Vandam St. 924-1120.)

Falsettoland—This latest installment of a three-part cantata by William Finn (music and lyrics) is a sequel to "In Trousers" and "March of the Falsettos." Mr. Finn's story presents a number of new elements (among them a Bar Mitzvah in the hospital room of a man who is dying of AIDS) before dissolving in its own syrup. The music sounds agreeable enough, and the performance goes smoothly, under the direction of James Lapine. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)

Fiddler on the Roof—The Israeli actor Topol makes a commanding Tevye—the best of all of them—in this production, which falls somewhere between revival and facsimile. The songs are by Bock and Harnick; the dances and direction are re-created from the Jerome Robbins originals; and the costumes are from the Patricia Zipprodt originals. (12/3/90) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 586-6510.)

The Fine Art of Finesse—A romantic comedy by Marivaux, in a translation by Alex Szogyi. With Robin Leslie Brown, Frank Geraci, Stuart Lerch, and others. Richard Morse directed. (Pearl Theatre, 125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708. Closes Jan. 12.)

Forever Plaid—Stuart Ross's loving, tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. The performances of Jason Graae, Stan Chandler, David Engel, and Guy Stroman (as the Plaids, a close-harmony group snuffed out in the prime of life and brought back to earth for a single evening) are so deadpan, and the songs (arranged by James Raitt) are rendered at such a heightened pitch of musical good faith, that only from Ross's script and choreography would you know the thing is a parody. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.)

Jackie Mason: Brand New—The comedian brings his one-man show to Broadway again. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Presenting two plays in rotating repertory: Ibsen's **When We Dead Awaken** and Cocteau's **Infernal Machine.** (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Monster in a Box—Spalding Gray's latest autobiographical monologue. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Oh, Kay!—A joyous revival of a musical originally done here in 1926, this time with an all-black (all-gifted) company. The score, by George Gershwin, with lyrics by Ira Gershwin, and the singing and nimble dancing of the whole company are so glorious that they nearly compensate for the damnable din of amplification. With Brian Mitchell and Angela Teek as the romantic leads, and with fleet-footed Gregg Burge, Kevin Ramsey, and Stanley Wayne Mathis as the principal dancers. (11/12/90) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)

Once on This Island—A musical by Lynn Ahrens (book and lyrics) and Stephen Flaherty (score), which is based on Rosa Guy's 1985 novel, "My Love, My Love." (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Peter Pan—The Cathy Rigby revival is pretty much what you'd expect from a road-show revival that has as its star a world-class gymnast: shopworn—if good, clean—fun. (12/31/90) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 246-0102. Closes Jan. 20.)

The Piano Lesson—August Wilson's newest drama, the fourth in his series chronicling the black-American experience in the twentieth century, is set in Pittsburgh, in 1936. In its exquisite writing and over-all structure (involving the conflict over a piano that figures hauntingly and intricately in one family's history) the play resembles "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" more than "Fences." Wilson takes refuge in an overly mystical and melodramatic ending, but there are some great scenes. Lloyd Richards was the director. (4/30/90) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 582-4022.)

Prelude to a Kiss—Craig Lucas's entertaining romantic comedy slips into fantasy when an old man kisses a bride at her wedding. Barnard Hughes *is the old man,* Ashley Crow *is* the bride, and John Dossett is the groom. Mr. Hughes leaves the cast after the Jan. 4 performance; his replacement is to be announced. (3/26/90) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450.)

Remembrance—Aideen O'Kelly, Malachy McCourt, and John Finn in a play by Graham Reid. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

Romeo and Juliet—Robert Sean Leonard and Gerit Quealy star in this Riverside Shakespeare Company production, directed by Charles Keating. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

The Seagull: The Hamptons: 1990—D. B. Sweeney and Carol Lynley in an adaptation of the Chekhov classic. (RAPP Arts Center, 220 E. 4th St. 279-4200. Closes Jan. 6.)

Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll—All manner of hypocrites, fakes, liars, and other ethical discards are subjected to Eric Bogosian's incomparable mimicry and wit. The evening is anything but depressing. (2/26/90) (Orpheum Theatre, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477. Closes Jan. 6.)

Shadowlands—William Nicholson's vulgar stage adaptation of the beautiful television film that he wrote for the BBC about C. S. Lewis is essentially a tourist trap. It Broadwayizes everything that in the movie was subtle or sincere. Directed by Elijah Moshinsky; with Nigel Hawthorne and Jane Alexander. (11/26/90) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099.)

Shogun: The Musical—Or "James Clavell's Shogun: The Musical," to give credit where credit is due, is a real hoot. It has a shipwreck sequence, a lightning effect, an entire number performed on a treadmill, a slow-motion sequence, a gunshot, an earthquake, a rainstorm, a snowstorm, a cavalry charge, a Ninja raid, a haiku competition, and a song about sex paraphernalia, and it begins with two half-naked men banging on drums. What more do you want? (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 246-0102.)

Six Degrees of Separation—You're best off knowing nothing about the new John Guare play other than that it represents a perfect meeting of the playwright, director Jerry Zaks, and actress Stockard Channing. Out of a true story—one apparently about celebrity and Good Samaritanism—Guare has fashioned a wistful comedy about race, class, money, imagination, collective conscience, individual psyche, and the impulse toward art. (6/25/90) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

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SMOKE ON THE MOUNTAIN—This loving satire of old-time gospel music, set in 1938, is perfectly delightful. Written by Connie Ray (who also performs, along with six other versatile actor-musicians), it re-creates a Saturday-night service at a small church in rural North Carolina, where a family of more or less devout gospel singers have been invited to appear. (Lambs Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

THE SUM OF US—David Stevens' poignant comedy about how hard it is for parents and children to break free of each other (particularly if they get on too well) is set in present-day Australia. Depending on how you look at it, the play is either very dear and rather flawed or rather dear and very flawed; but cast and direction are both excellent, and Sammy Goldwyn is electrifying as a young homosexual who wishes his father weren't quite so laid back about his homosexuality. (11/5/90) (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

THOSE WERE THE DAYS—One could almost wish that this tribute to the Yiddish musical theatre, directed and choreographed by Eleanor Reissa, were less assimilated—stricter in its concept and selection (witness the title song, which has nothing to do with the Yiddish musical theatre). But the charming and adept performances of Bruce Adler, Robert Abelson, Mina Bern, and Lori Wilner, together with Zalmen Mlotek's klezmer music, make the show a joyful celebration of the shtetl culture, and put it among the very best of its kind. (Edison, 240 W. 47th St. 302-2302.)

TOWNSHIP FEVER—Mbongeni Ngema's new South African musical. (Majestic, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 1-718 636-4100. Closes Jan. 20.)

LONG RUNS

ASPECTS OF LOVE: Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest extravaganza, based on David Garnett's frail 1955 novel of the same title, aspires to good taste and sophistication (it's about artists and theatre folk rather than cats or trains) but ends up being a monument to vulgarity. The combination of Garnett's triviality and Lloyd Webber's pretentiousness produces something so empty it implodes. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **BLACK AND BLUE:** An evening of classic blues and jazz, conceived, designed, and directed by Claudio Segovia and Héctor Orezzoli, who created "Tango Argentino" in a similarly commemorative but far less visually opulent style. Musicians of renown have been assembled, and while La Vern Baker, Linda Hopkins, and Carrie Smith sing, a troupe of hoofers young and old give the tap-dance subculture a workout. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 246-0102.) . . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.) . . . **CITY OF ANGELS:** Larry Gelbart, dramatist; Cy Coleman, composer; Billy Byers, arranger; and Michael Blakemore, director, are all in top form in this sharp, jokey musical satire about Hollywood in the forties. The plot concerns the making of a private-eye movie (and the unmaking of its author); Tom Wopat and Michael Rupert lead the cast. The spectacular setting and costumes were designed by Robin Wagner and Florence Klotz and lighted by Paul Gallo. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run celebrated its thirtieth birthday last May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.) . . . **A FEW GOOD MEN:** "Mister Roberts" meets "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." Aaron Sorkin's military-courtroom drama treats issues such as justice, honor, loyalty, and morality with the slick, facile smugness of a half-hour comedy series. With Perry King, Bradley Whitford, and Pamela Blair. Directed by Don Scardino. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1991:** A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.) . . . **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. With David Carroll, Lynette Perry, Chip Zien, and Caitlin Brown. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-0102.) . . . **GYPSY:** This revival of the great Sondheim-Styne-Laurents-Robbins musical (directed by Arthur Laurents himself) is so delightful that we think anyone would be happier for having seen it. With Linda Lavin as Mama Rose. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 246-0102. Closes Jan. 6.) . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. With Craig Schulman as Jean Valjean, Robert Westenberg as Javert, and Christy Baron as Fantine. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.) . . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.) . . . **OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY:** Jerry Sterner's comedy about a New York corporate raider's attempt to take over a decorous New England business maintains its suspense from beginning to end. Gloria Muzio was the director. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.) . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **THE ROTHSCHILDS:** A revival of the 1970 musical by Jerry Bock (score), Sheldon Harnick (lyrics), and Sherman Yellen (book). The cast includes Mike Burstyn, Sue Ann Gershenson, and John Loprieno. Lonny Price directed. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

La Chanze in "Once on This Island"

DANCE

ONE doesn't often spot balletomanes at the State Theatre lying in wait for the *conductor* of the New York City Ballet's "Nutcracker" to autograph their programs. So we were interested to see a young boy, pen in hand, tear after guest conductor Donald York as he emerged from the stage door following a recent matinée. When the child—who identified himself as "Billy, a trumpeter from Connecticut"—was out of earshot, we turned to Mr. York, who is the musical director of the Paul Taylor company and a frequent guest conductor for dance companies outside New York City, and asked him how many autographs he had signed so far for "The Nutcracker." "This is my first," he answered.

We suspect that it won't be his last. Although, in conversation, Mr. York was critical of his own efforts that afternoon, the audience still heard a vigorous account of Tchaikovsky's marvellous score, and was treated to an unusually energized account of Balanchine's marvellous ballet. The music seemed to be egging the dancers on, and, for the first time in quite a while, they looked more challenged than complacent.

We asked Mr. York about conducting "The Nutcracker." "My tempi as a conductor always tend to be the fastest possible," he said. "I love conducting for these dancers, since, for the most part, Balanchine used Tchaikovsky's tempo markings, which are fast. Only the variation for Coffee is significantly slower than Tchaikovsky. Well, there is the matter of the Sugar Plum Fairy. The company dogma is that her performance tempi should always be the same as what's in the score, but in my experience here—I'm conducting nine 'Nutcracker's this season—the tempi are somewhat flexible according to which ballerina is dancing. Even then, we're only talking about the difference between metronome markings of one hundred twenty and one hundred twenty-six. This is not like the 'Nutcracker's you find in other big New York ballet companies or in some of the Russian troupes, where the music is totally distorted."

He continued, "I find Act I much harder than Act II to conduct from a musical perspective, but, then again, in Act I there is a lot less dancing and you don't have as much responsibility to the stage. In the second act, you've got to nail those tempi, piece by piece, although once you nail them, they're static. When I first conducted 'The Nutcracker,' I didn't love it, but the more I work with the score, the more I find in it. And I *feel* the stage events as they happen: when the tree grows and the windows come crashing in! The end of 'Waltz of the Flowers.' Snow!"

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—Dec. 31 at 7; Jan. 2-3 at 6; Jan. 4 at 8; Jan. 5 at 2 and 8; and Jan. 6 at 1 and 5: "The Nutcracker." . . . ¶ Jan. 8 at 8: "Mozartiana," divertimento from "Le Baiser de la Fée," and "Souvenir de Florence." . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 8: "La Source," "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze'," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. The winter season continues through Feb. 24.)

PILOBOLUS—Final performances of the engagement. Dec. 31, Jan. 3, and Jan. 5, all at 8; and Jan. 6 at 2: "The Particle Zoo," "Moonblind," "Tarleton's Resurrection," "Cedar Island," and "Day Two." . . . ¶ Jan. 2 at 8: "The Particle Zoo," "Moonblind," "Clandestiny," "Pseudopodia," and "Untitled." . . . ¶ Jan. 4 at 8: "Ciona," "Axones," "Shizen," solo from "The Empty Suitor," and "Land's Edge." . . . ¶ Jan. 5 at 2: "Molly's Not Dead," "Pseudopodia," "Televisitation," and "Debut C." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

"ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT"—Opening performances of a three-week series (through Jan. 27) that will feature six choreographers and their groups. Jan. 8 at 8: Peter Pucci Plus Dancers. . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 8: Wendy Perron Dance Company. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

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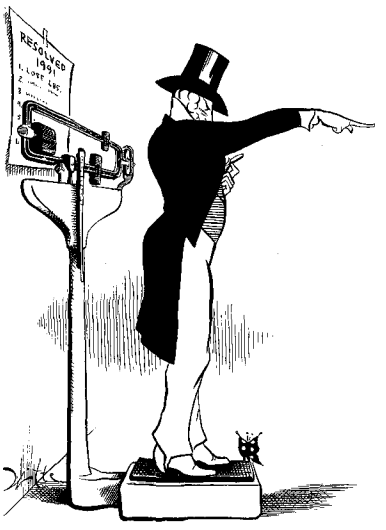

NIGHT LIFE

IF the past few years in pop music have proved anything, it's that rock stars never die, they just fade away—and then come back. David Clayton-Thomas, the lead singer of Blood, Sweat & Tears, is not really anyone's idea of a rock star—a squat, bearded man, built like a nose tackle, he would make a surpassing Macy's Santa—but he does keep coming back. Though B. S. & T. reached its zenith some twenty years ago, and hasn't put out an album in a decade, Clayton-Thomas, with an ever-shifting lineup, continues to keep the band alive. We caught them at the Blue Note recently, and the big surprise is that there's more to the group than "Spinning Wheel": if you haven't browsed through your 8-track collection in a while, you may have forgotten about their other hits, such as "You've Made Me So Very Happy," "And When I Die," and a version of "God Bless the Child." As these titles suggest, the group has quite a wide streak of earnestness; onstage, Clayton-Thomas—his feet planted wide, his fists striking the air, his face indefatigably cheerful—looks like a cross between an evangelist and Bo Schembechler. The band has been credited with inventing a particular form of jazz-rock; their songs have complex, multi-tempo arrangements and weave together many genres: "God Bless the Child" includes a salsa passage; "Spinning Wheel" has a merry-go-round coda. As with Chicago, their contemporaries and closest stylistic counterparts, there's a cornball aspect to the group's seamless appropriation, as well as to their busy horn section: at times they sound like the halftime show at the Rose Bowl. And by straddling the fence between jazz and rock they run the risk of displeasing purists on either side. That said, B. S. & T. puts on a great show: Clayton-Thomas's enthusiasm is infectious, and it's a pleasure to watch his tight, disciplined band try to stay with him.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**Susannah Mc Corkle,** a jazz singer with a rich, effluent voice and a seductive stage persona, winds up work in the Oak Room on Jan. 5. The last time we saw Ms. McCorkle perform, her mind was on Lester Young, with a few thoughts given to Chet Baker and João Gilberto as well. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine-fifteen, and Fridays and Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen. Dining.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A tony cabaret attained by passing through an opulent tapas restaurant, where wicker baskets overflow with fruit and vegetables and a row of Serrano hams hangs over the bar; if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. The twenties-minded chanteuse **Helen Schneider**—of whom singer/pianist/radio host Steve Ross once said, "To be three feet away from that kind of energy: marvellous!"—will be here Jan. 3-5. Samba superstar **Elza Soares** starts up Jan. 8, in a pre-carnival festival of Brazilian singers.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A jazz club that would be a perfect stop on a bus tour (there's even a souvenir shop that sells Kodak). It's a good idea to make a reservation and show up well in advance. **Wynton Marsalis** leads a quintet here Jan. 1-6. First set at nine. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—A big, pleasant room where they pack them in until someone says uncle. If you end up without a seat, you can stand at the bar—finally a club where they don't force you to drink—and mull over photographs from great shows you've missed. The **Turtles,** featuring **Flo and Eddie,** perform Jan. 4-5. **Taj Mahal,** who claims Jan. 9, is a testament to the heights that can be reached by a lone performer with piano and guitar and nothing

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else. He has a rich, scratchy voice, plays everything from romping barrelhouse piano to lulling finger-picking guitar, and is given to wearing panama hats. Traditional country blues are his strongest suit, and he delivers them with such clarity and ease that you feel as if you were sitting on a backwoods porch. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at eight and eleven, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A neighborhood bar where, if your neighbors coöperate, you can hear the beautiful, singular sound of musicians thinking. A trio consisting of saxophonist **sonny fortune,** pianist **kenny barron,** and bassist **david williams** will be at work Jan. 1-5. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The **modern jazz quartet** begins a month-and-a-half-long engagement here Jan. 4. The quartet, which has been doing its fastidious swinging for more than thirty years and which has at least four hundred pieces in its repertory, tends to play in big halls these days, so its occasional layovers in this intimate space are to be treasured. Sets at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans' Bar, **frank owens** presides at the piano from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—In the late seventies and early eighties, this dark cave (graffiti-covered walls, a battered pool table, rest rooms for the intrepid only) was the hub of a thriving punk-music scene—Blondie, Talking Heads, the Ramones, and Television were regular attractions. Other clubs of the era have fizzled, but CB's perseveres, and young hopefuls continue to fill the stage nightly. Music from nine-thirty Sundays through Thursdays, and from ten-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

Condon's, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—A snug, candlelit catacomb just east of Union Square. The fine, hard-swinging saxophonist **lou donaldson** brings in a quartet for a week-long gig beginning Jan. 2. Music after nine.

Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, posers, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. The motif is prehistoric punk—a Stone Age mural, assorted toy dinosaurs and pterodactyls—and on peak nights there's a "take no prisoners" atmosphere. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at ten, Fridays at midnight, and Saturdays at eleven.

Delta 88, 332 Eighth Ave., at 26th St. (924-3499)—A tin-roofed, hubcap-awninged, soul-food-serving, chicken-shack theme bar. Exhibits include a rusted Orange Crush sign, a Pat Boone record jacket, bottle caps spelling out "Welcome," and other peckerwood flotsam. (If this place weren't a restaurant, it could be a flea market.) The clientele is mainly Northern urban. There's live music most nights, including gospel on Mondays and zydeco on Thursdays. Shows after nine. Chicken-fried steak, deep-fried crawdads (a.k.a. Cajun popcorn), and other exotic Southern fare.

Eagle Tavern, 355 W. 14th St., at Ninth Ave. (924-0275)—An Irish pub in the meat-packing district, not too far from the boondocks. In the front room, barbirds study the TV and growl about one thing or another, and in the back room another crowd listens to Irish folk musicians (on Fridays) and native string bands (on Saturdays). Morning Star plays on Jan. 4, and the Juggernaut String Band comes in on Jan. 5.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—If submarines had jazz clubs, they might look like this basement haunt, which is reached by passing through a tight corridor where you half expect to bump into Admiral Nimitz. This is not the place for those with a fear of intimacy: at the front tables you can go eye to eye with your favorite performers, and no matter where you're seated there's not much room to practice your T'ai Chi. The **mingus dynasty band** holds forth Jan. 1-6; vocalist **cassandra wilson** gets started on Jan. 8. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **les paul,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

Fortune Garden Pavilion, 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—With jazz you get eggroll. At this posh-looking two-floor Chinese restaurant, tucked into a midtown skyscraper, you'll find a lot of business types and a lot of hanging plants. Jan. 2-7 you'll also find the guitar team of **bucky pizzarelli** and **gene bertoncini.** Music from eight Mondays through Saturdays, and from seven on Sundays.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark-wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass-figurine lamps. The musicians gather around the Steinway that sits in the dining room, but chin music is often the dominant sound. Pianist **james williams** and bassist **christian mc bride** are on duty Jan. 2-5; pianist **judy carmichael** and saxophonist **mike hashim** begin a two-week engagement on Jan. 9. Music from nine-thirty.

Lauterbach's Brooklyn Beat, 335 Prospect Ave., at Sixth Ave., Brooklyn. (1-718 788-9140)—A grungy but well-intentioned watering hole devoted to homegrown Brooklyn bands. The emphasis is on exposed cement, although one wall is decorated with Polaroids—"St. Patty's 1986" (people in green hats and leis), "New Year's 1989" (people in red hats and leis). Lauterbach's microwave menu includes shepherd's pie and chicken parmigiana, but the musical menu is almost always a better bet.

Ludlow Street Café, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—A modest below-stairs room that looks like a slightly spruced-up tenement-building apartment. There's cheap Ecuadoran food, a Greater East Village crowd, and, every Monday night, **beat rodeo,** a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mix of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, Velvets, and various pop curiosities. Music from ten-thirty.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A recent addition to the little-heralded Upper East Side club scene. Don't go expecting to be sprayed with soapy water and massaged by large brushes: the fluorescent sign outside is the only car-wash reference. Inside, the place looks like an adman's idea of a blues bar. Neal Black and

We all remember a simpler time. Phones rang less. Laughter rang true. The world turned slowly. You ran out the door to greet the new day. And all you needed was a friend and a game to make it worthwhile. But maybe the times weren't simpler at all. Maybe all you really need is a place to simplify yourself again.

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Elza Soares at the Ballroom

the Preachers are on hand Jan. 3; Bill Sims and the Coldblooded Blues Band claim Jan. 4-5; a blues jam takes place on Jan. 6; and Cilla and the Rhythm Kings tune up on Jan. 7.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—A place where a fella and a gal can put on the feedbag, get a little tight, and cut a rug. Mondays belong to Howie Wyeth's ragtime trio, Tuesdays to **Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks**, Wednesdays to the Stan Rubin band, Fridays to Rick Hardeman and the Basin Street Six, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers. Music from six on Sundays, from eight-thirty Mondays through Thursdays, and from nine Fridays and Saturdays.

Spo-dee-o-dee, 565 W. 23rd St., at Eleventh Ave. (206-1990)—A night club in a part of Chelsea the real-estate agents don't show you. It's a modest-sized space, with room to dance, a stage that's occupied most nights, and a décor that includes Victorian-style chandeliers, movie-theatre drapes, and murals of Cotton Club-era dancers. At peak hours (late), you'll get an eyeful of waves, perms, teased and sprayed locks, lip gloss, fishnets, fringed jackets, leather pants, and designer-outlet New Wave apparel.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-tin ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. The flashy, more-bang-for-your-buck pianist **MC Coy Tyner** plays in a trio with **Avery Sharpe** and **Aaron Scott** Sundays through Thursdays. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter Miles Evans is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." The fleet-fingered jazz guitarist **Larry Coryell** leads a quartet Jan. 1-6. A big band formerly led by the late Mel Lewis holds sway on Mondays. Music after ten.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—**Blues Traveler**, the unofficial house band at this shrine to hippiedom, is a quintessential live band. Like the Dead, to whom they're often compared, they play leisurely tunes, full of extended solos, that cull from rock, jazz, funk, and blues. They'll be here Jan. 5-6.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village and always wondered about. Pianist **Kirk Lightsey** and bassist **Cecil McBee** work through Jan. 12. Music weeknights from eight, and Sundays from seven.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

THEY'RE turning off the Rockefeller Center tree earlier than they used to. The temperature is all wrong. The economy is all wrong: pink slips outnumbered pink bows. Radiators and gas tanks ate the gift money. Store owners looked desperate. And if all this wasn't enough to make you feel shaky about the holidays, almost every day last month the mailbox yielded holiday stationery with the news that "a donation in your name has been sent to (fill in the charity)." Certainly one musn't be ungrateful for the generosity of others toward the less fortunate (even when it manifests itself as enforced selflessness), but after the eighteenth envelope it did get a little frustrating. Perhaps this is our punishment for rampant consumerism in the eighties, but, c'mon guys, couldn't you have thrown one little stocking stuffer this way? We give, but we need, too.

Luckily, the Monday night before last, photographer Bob Frame figured out a way to endow as well as enlighten. Frame and his manager/partner/friend Janet Botaish invited more than two hundred of their friends and business associates to the Friends Meeting House, off Stuyvesant Square, for a collective present. "I wanted to do this because we have to get back to what Christmas is about," Frame said as the evening began. "To remember friends who are gone, friends who are sick, friends who are well." He then presented our present. There was no wrapped box to shred, no thin envelope to open, for the gospel choir Lavender Light would not have fitted into either one. They are eighteen magnificent and gifted young men and women—black and white, gay and lesbian—who together sing of joy, hope, strength, love, and God. In two hours, they took us from a group of shy listeners scattered around a church (with the greatest density in the back) to a down-front contingent of clapping, stomping, praising, wailing, beaming reborn believers. Believers in the spirit of the season. Believers in the power of music. Believers in the need for unshakable faith in oneself. Their faces glowed, their voices soared, they made us palm-red crazy with happiness. Finally, our brain waves had located the dormant lobe marked Christmas.

Seek out Lavender Light this month, next month, whenever. In the meantime, walk through Rockefeller Center a little earlier, skate at the Wollman Rink, buy yourself a gift. Do whatever you can to remind yourself why you must think Christmas, even if it's a week or two late. We'd almost forgotten, and, trust us, such reminders feel wonderful. In the dark of the night, a radiator does only so much. It can't hold a candle to eighteen hearts. Or one.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

"Eros"—A performance work born out of a collaboration among Yoshito Ohno, a butoh dancer; Maureen Fleming, a performance artist; and Mickey Hart, the Grateful Dead's percussionist. (La Mama Annex, 66 E. 4th St. 475-7710. Jan. 3-6 at 7:30. Performances run through Jan. 20.)

Blue Man Group—In a new performance work that includes paint squirting, Jell-O games, and drumming. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. Jan. 3-6 at 10. Through Jan. 19.)

Paul Zaloom—Using toys, tools, trash, and packaging materials as animated props for his new work, "My Civilization." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Jan. 8-9 at 8. Through Jan. 20.)

Laurie Anderson—In the last of the performances associated with the Museum of Modern Art's "High and Low" show. (11 W. 53rd St. Jan. 8 at 8. For information about tickets, call 708-9500.)

P. S. 122—Jan. 3-6 at 9:30: Stephanie Skura & Company in "The Bad Play," Ana Maria Simo's work about a suburban family and their Cuban maid. Through Jan. 27. ¶ Jan. 8 at 7 and 9: "Sphinxes Without Secrets," a new video by Maria Beatty about women performance artists. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

ART

WHY not start the new year by taking in some Marcus Garvey vitamin pills? A few bottles of these, guaranteed to bring you "strength" and "potency," are on display in a case that also contains other magically endowed objects such as small painted elephant-dung sculptures. They are part of a wonderful retrospective of works made over the past twenty years by the extraordinary David Hammons, an artist who is no longer overlooked. The show, which Hammons at the last moment titled "Rousing the Rubble," is on view at P.S. 1, in Long Island City, through February 10. (46-01 21st Street; opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)

Hammons' installation last year at Exit Art, dedicated to the musician John Coltrane, was one of the most poetically charged and mood-altering of the season. A couple of the Coltrane pieces appear in this show: for instance, a floor sculpture, titled "Kick the Bucket," that consists of a punning pile of coal under a rainbow formation of empty Night Train and —in homage to Charlie (Bird) Parker —Thunderbird bottles. Other models by Hammons include a new installation called "Jesus Is the Light," in which tiny crucifixes dangling from the ceiling glow in the dark, accompanied by a soul-cleansing Aretha Franklin tape; "How You Like Me Now," a controversial 1988 billboard painting of a bleached, blonded, and blue-eyed Jesse Jackson; a large tapestry, titled "Flying Carpet," that is covered with actual fried-chicken parts and that reminded us of work by other contemporary orchestrators of culture's debris, most notably Cady Noland and the Belgian Guillaume Bijl; two 1990 standing sculptures, titled "Rocky" and "Esquire," made of plant stands with head-shaped stones adorned with honest-to-God Afro-American hair; and a spectacular series of rafters-high basketball-hoop constructions, including a tramp-style hoop made of bottle caps and another hoop, titled "High Falutin'," that is part chandelier.

In an unusual written statement at the entrance to the exhibition, Hammons tells us that he was "actually" born the youngest of ten chil-

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dren in "central America"—i.e., Springfield, Illinois. He spent twelve years in California, until he was "run out of town" for reasons that he "cannot discuss at this time." He now lives in Harlem, but spent a recent year working at the American Academy in Rome. He says he remembers when our city "was new and hadn't had the York put on yet," and—balm to all stressed-out hearts of greater Manhattan!—claims that his Harlem neighborhood is "rich in ruins, like Rome."

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries" includes four hundred works of art from the pre-Columbian era through 1950. Through Jan. 13. . . . ¶ "Carroll and Milton Petrie European Sculpture Court." If you've ever wondered what the Metropolitan looked like before all the variously styled annexes were added, even before it was given its present façade, wander down this oddly long-and-narrow corridor. One of the long walls is the restored 1888 carriage entrance to the museum—part of its first addition—and it is all that remains of the Renaissance Revival façade. Opposite the massive rusticated arched windows of this red-brick-and-limestone relic is a recent neoclassical wall designed by Kevin Roche, with a pitched skylight roof connecting the old wall to the new. The architecture works quite well, even with its hokey trellises and plantings. It is an awful lot of space, however, to devote to an essentially uninteresting smattering of seventeenth-to-nineteenth-century statuary. The best works, in fact, are in an annex—more an architectural afterthought—off to the side of the court, in the entrance to the grandly named Henry R. Kravis Wing. There you will find Rodin's "Burghers of Calais," which is awkwardly sited but would look great anywhere; Bourdelle's amazing bronze statue of the sculptor Carpeaux; and a number of Maillols. Perhaps the finest works in the Petrie Court proper are the earliest: two very funny sculptures of a fruit-bearing Priapus and Flora that originally graced the entrance of the Villa Borghese, by Pietro Bernini, assisted by his soon-to-be-better-known young son, Gian Lorenzo. . . . ¶ "Théâtre de la Mode," in the Costume Institute, is a re-creation of a 1945 fashion exhibition that raised money for French war relief. Due to a fabric shortage, the couture, by such designers as Balenciaga, Lanvin, and Worth, was presented in miniature, on thirty-inch wire mannequins with ceramic heads. A hundred and seventy of the original dolls have been restored for this show. . . . ¶ "Albrecht Dürer: The Apocalypse" presents fifteen woodcuts of apocalyptic catastrophes, along with a small number of Gothic and Renaissance prints. Through March 17. . . . ¶ Photographs from the fifties and sixties, selected from the museum's collection. Among the artists shown are William Klein, Helen Levitt, Bill Brandt, and Lisette Model. Through March 17. . . . ¶ The annual Christmas tree and Neapolitan crèche are on view in the Medieval Sculpture Hall. Through Jan. 13. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"High and Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture" is divided into four themes (graffiti, caricature, comics, advertising) and includes more than two hundred and fifty works. Through Jan. 15. . . . ¶ In a recessed niche, Gary Hill has installed video screens of various sizes (one is as small as a thumb), each containing the life-size image of a different part of a man's body. Together the screens approximate the whole; a soundtrack of a barely audible voice suggests, as do the images themselves, trapped life. It is a powerful little installation, a technologically up-to-date entombment that seems to look to Mantegna and Grünewald for inspiration. Through Jan. 6. . . . ¶ There is not a speck of glamour to be found in "New Photography," an engaging exhibition of photographs by Carl Pope, Paul D'Amato, and JoAnn Verburg. Instead, there's sweat, dirt, poverty, alienation, self-defense. None of the pictures try to woo the viewer. But D'Amato's photo of rosebushes covered in plastic is particularly haunting. It's a lyrical, beautiful image, breaking through the pessimism that characterizes the rest of the show. Through Jan. 8. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until autumn, 1991.

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Robert Rauschenberg: The Silk Screen Paintings, 1962-64." It has been more than a decade since the last Rauschenberg retrospective, so this very focussed show of one of the artist's most productive periods comes as a special treat. Half of the nearly eighty silk-screen paintings he made during the early sixties are on view, and their energy is intense. These paintings are striking because while they chronicle the spirit of their time with amalgamations of machine-produced media images—Rauschenberg's Kennedy is as much an icon as Warhol's Marilyn—they are also chock-a-block full of glorious brushwork. There is a lusty unruliness to this work that sets Rauschenberg apart from his more calculating peers Johns and Warhol. We are distant enough from Pop art now to see "Barge," his thirty-two-foot-long magnum opus of the period, as an everlasting work; its grand scale is related to Pollock and its brilliant mark-making may conjure Twombly, but it remains vintage Rauschenberg. Through March 17. . . . ¶ "Mind Over Matter," a show of works by six "idea-oriented" artists—Liz Larner, Ronald Jones, Tishan Hsu, Nayland Blake, Ashley Bickerton, and Annette Lemieux. Through Jan. 6. . . . ¶ Several animal sculptures from the museum's collection are on view in the lobby, including works by Hunt Diederich, Elie Nadelman, Gaston Lachaise, and Alexander Calder. Through Jan. 6. (Open Tuesdays, except New Year's Day, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—An exhibition of sixty paintings by Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917). Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ Forty works of art from Oceania (mostly from the Sepik and Ramu river basins in New Guinea), including three-inch-long fish-hooks, three monumental carved-wood "guardians," and a skull rack made of palm and bamboo. Through Feb. 4. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 5.)

Grolier Club, 47 E. 60th St.—A show of several different types of documents produced during the Second World War: pamphlets, posters, propaganda leaflets, invasion maps, personal letters, and official speeches. One display juxtaposes two letters sent home to wives after the launching of D Day: one from Eisenhower, hopeful and optimistic, the other from Rommel, who wrote, "The enemy's superiority in nearly all regards is overwhelming." Through March 2. (Open daily, except Sundays and New Year's Day, 10 to 5.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"Be Merry & Wise" examines the development of children's books in England from the seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth. Among the many books, manuscripts, and drawings on view are the "History of Tom Thumbe" (1621, the first English folktale in print), Dorothy Kilner's "The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse" (1783), and the third edition of Edward Lear's "Book of Nonsense" (1861). Through Feb. 3. (Open Tuesdays, except New Year's Day, through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—A hundred and thirteen master drawings, from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth, by such artists as Poussin, Fragonard, Delacroix, and Cézanne. From the Louis-Antoine Prat collection, in Paris. Through Jan. 20. . . . ¶ Drawings and watercolors by the British Romantic Henry Fuseli (1741-1825). Through March 24. (Open Tuesdays, except New Year's Day, noon to 8, with no admission charge from 5 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—"Rhetorical Image" seeks to investigate the ways in which artists from around the world respond to various political situations. Among the twenty artists presenting photographs, videos, paintings, and installations are Barbara Steinman, Tatsuo Miyajima, Cildo Meireles, and Krzysztof Wodiczko. Through Feb. 3. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"On Paper" examines the history of papermaking, from its invention in China through John Cage's edible paper. Through March 2. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall. Open daily, except Sundays and New Year's Day, 10 to 6.) . . . ¶ Manuscript fragments, letters, first editions, photographs, and illustrations are all part of "Charles Dickens: His Life and Work." (Berg Collection. Open daily, except Sundays, Thursdays, and New Year's Day, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. They will be closed New Year's Day.)

Sigmar Polke—An essential show of key sixties works done in a variety of mediums, probably unfamiliar to many American viewers, by this most mercurial and influential of contemporary German artists. The "Potato House" has been reconstructed, along with other ephemeral masterpieces. (This is the conceptual Polke.) Through Jan. 19. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St.)

"The British Imagination: Twentieth-Century Paintings, Sculptures, and Drawings"—A show in which, even in the most ostensibly abstract art, one detects an obsession with the figure and with narrative. Works by twenty-two artists are included, beginning with the early moderns Walter Sickert and Gwen John, and culminating with some of the best-known English painters working today, including Bacon, Freud, Kossoff, Auerbach, Hodgkin, and Hockney. Through Jan. 12. (Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St.)

Short List—**Giorgio de Chirico,** Borghi, 26 E. 80th St. (through Jan. 15, except Dec. 31); **Glenn Goldberg,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. (through Jan. 9).

GALLERIES—57th STREET AREA

Willem de Kooning and **Jean Dubuffet** (1901-85)—An exceptionally strong and coherent exhibition of paintings, mostly from the fifties, and all of women, by the two masters. For de Kooning, Woman tends to be a frightening though rather familiar bourgeoise: the floozy as Mother. To Dubuffet, she was the eternal archaic mystery—yes, the "Other," which rhymes with . . .—but a benign one really, more like the total *maman*. Through Jan. 19. (Pace, 32 E. 57th St.)

Egon Schiele (1890-1918)—This surprisingly moving show of works on paper indicates that Schiele is the exemplary Expressionist. Almost all of his work is twisted compositionally and conveys bodily angst, and his sexual renderings are among the most intimate, confrontational, *maudits*, and beautiful. His stringy teen-age Sapphos and Törlesses, and his neurasthenic aesthetes, may make you think that the very flesh of his subjects is being consumed by uneasy desires. Through Jan. 12. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St.)

Sean Scully—Few artists have as sophisticated a sense of composition as Scully, and his new works are, as usual, masterly. They feature the artist's stripe configurations, multi-panel formats, and painting-within-painting structures, but now the stripes are very wide and

Self-portrait by Gary Panter

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

the scale quite corporate. Although they seem to strive for the grand scale of the Abstract Expressionists, the enlargement brings little more than added bulk. Through Jan. 9. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Richard Tuttle—In the nineteen-seventies Tuttle became the master of installation by wedding his very simple objects—an octagon of paper or a slant-edged piece of wood, for example—to walls so that object and support, or art and environment, were inseparable. For his current show, on both floors of Blum Helman, he has made objects that look more independent—very beautiful, humbly framed watercolors of marks, and almost incidental Constructivistic constructions of bits of raw wood—but that are installed in an adamantly environmental way, on walls that have been painted with brushy horizontal bands of blue, green, and yellow. Downstairs, this placement makes for a very odd display because the space itself is so dispersed, as if the artist's focus were being pulled between the object and the wall. But in the upstairs gallery, which is more intimate, the installation nature of the work kicks in strongly. There the artist has created an airy jewel box, in which the watercolors suggest Kandinsky's early warlike "abstract" paintings. Through Jan. 12. (20 W. 57th St.)

Short List—**Christian Boltanski**, Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. (through Jan. 19); **David Hockney** (through Jan. 5) and **Hans Hofmann** (through Jan. 26), Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.; **Frederick Kiesler** and **Leonard Stokes**, McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. (through Feb. 2); **Creighton Michael**, Ruth Siegel, 24 W. 57th St. (through Jan. 16); **Walter Pichler** and **Arnulf Rainer**, Ulysses, 41 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 19); **George Sugarman**, Washburn, 41 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 19).

GALLERIES—SoHo

Charles Clough—Interesting paintings, depicting what could be gaseous planets in formation, that exist somewhere between early Sam Francis and boardwalk spin art. Through Jan. 5. (American Fine Arts, 40 Wooster St.)

Anh Duong—As many people must know by now, Duong is a fashion model (and an inspiration for Christian Lacroix), and this very strong début show of large portrait paintings is indeed wonderfully stylish and astute. Duong paints thin. Her surfaces look stainlike rather than brushy, and her colors are straightforward and tonal, with some good, acid contrasts. Her drawing style is at once dandified and blunt, and these portraits, of various friends and fashionable figures about town, convey likenesses as well as psychologies without expressionistic fuss. Duong gets it all across through the body language of her figures and through individualized background motifs that somehow evoke character without being excessively literal. The socialite Anne McNally (wife of the restaurateur, Brian) is spotlit against a dark ground, and she wears a see-through chartreuse dress and an odd defensive stance: the very image of a harried avant-garde hausfrau. The portraits, in other words, seem to be lightly satiric as well as suavely hieratic. Through Jan. 5. (Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St.)

Jean Lowe / Gary Panter—A very indulgent, cliché-riddled installation of a kitschy rococo interior, unredeemed by the irony of its title, "A Dilettante's Conversation on the Topics of Anthropocentrism and Western Consumerism." / Paintings on paper of such East Village juvenilia as dinosaurs, big-busted babes, cartoon creatures, and rockers, by the man who designed the superlative set for "Pee-wee's Playhouse." Through Jan. 12. (Gracie Mansion Gallery, 532 Broadway.)

Agnes Martin—A group of large paintings with horizontal slate-gray stripes that are much bolder and more hard-edged—less landscapey, too—than before. They are handsome but puzzling. Has the reclusive Martin, who lives in New Mexico, been thinking about cities? Or about Southwestern storms? Through Jan. 12. (Pace, 142 Greene St.)

McDermott & McGough—Of all the gay male teams that deal openly with issues of homosexuality in their art, this one is perhaps the most dandified. At times their work can be too precious, too faux-pre-Edison, but often it is very strong. Some of the most finely detailed paintings in this show have an underlayer of gestural brushwork that in no way corresponds to the needs of the imagery. This kind of subtle deceit—with the wild underlying the domesticated—is a metaphor for much of their work. Among the effective pieces in this show are two retrospective paintings entitled "Splendid Achievements" (given false dates of 1943 and 1912), which are a mélange of the artists' works that have dealt most directly with homosexuality. "27, Rue de Fleurus, 1915," which refers to Gertrude Stein's salon and depicts an Arts and Crafts-type wall with an early Picasso hanging on it, is a very beautiful and mysterious work about the consummate decorativeness of art. Through Jan. 5. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.)

Mario Merz—For several decades Merz has been using his neon Fibonacci numbers in all sorts of works, ranging in spirit from aggressively male to poetically vulnerable. The piece in this show is one of the simplest, and a bit of a cross between the two poles. It consists of a twenty-one-unit sequence of the numbers, laid out in a diagonal line, each resting on a brick of plastic-wrapped clay. The clay has an appealing transformative presence—in a symbolic, Beusyian way—but the work's installation on a roped-off red linoleum floor makes it all unnecessarily coy. Through Jan. 26. (SteinGladstone, 99 Wooster St.)

Frank Stella—Large sculptures that look like heaps of partially compacted metallic junk after the fallout and suggest too much late-night-movie viewing. They are impressive for their monstrous scale—several are so huge that they require massive steel buttresses to support them—but for little else. Through Jan. 26. (65 Thompson Street Gallery.)

David Wojnarowicz—This artist did not receive much attention until he contracted AIDS and began making art that eloquently expressed his anger at our society and the way it deals with the disease. But, as this retrospective exhibition of paintings and painted objects makes clear, Wojnarowicz has been practicing his own form of guerrilla politics from the start. If you expect his paintings to open a discussion about painting, you are certain to be disappointed; but if you view them as a kind of magical visual poetry, you are likely to find a strange, disturbing, and horrifically beautiful world. A look at some of his writing, a few examples of which appear in the catalogue, could serve as a starting point. Wojnarowicz began his artistic life on the street, but, unlike his peers Haring and Holzer, he chose the streets because he grew up on them. There is something of the wild child to his work—much of it fixates on such boy imagery as dinosaurs, skeletons, machines, and sweaty sex. As Wojnarowicz's illness has brought the work a greater urgency and forced him into the larger public eye, the spirit of the boy has remained, bolstered in some odd way by wisdom. His fierce independence is the source of the work's strength. Through Jan. 19. (Exit Art, 578 Broadway. Closed Jan. 2.)

"Stuttering"—Some confusingly ponderous thesis underlies the selections for this group show. Even if you overlook it, however, there are a number of very good pieces to keep your mind going, works that elevate the artifactual detritus of life to aesthetic, fetishistic heights. Among them are Joel Otterson's tapestry woven from shredded food containers and corrugated boxes; Bertrand Lavier's dumbly minimalistic gridded "painting," made by overlapping sections of tennis and volleyball nets; Mike Kelley's sock dolls; Haim Steinbach's shoe made of noodles and displayed on a folksy craft-shop shelf; Georg Herold's sculpture of a mountain fashioned with wire and underwear; Joe Scanlon's wax candle cast in a Pop Tart box; and Jessica Stockholder's still-life of such discardables as the box for an electric-blanket control. Through Jan. 5. (Stux, 155 Spring St.)

"Work in Progress? Work?"—Once again the Rosen gallery is functioning as an alternative space, this time by tapping into a younger generation of process artists. Two of the artists have turned the tables: Laurie Parsons is working for the gallery for the duration of the exhibition, and Linda

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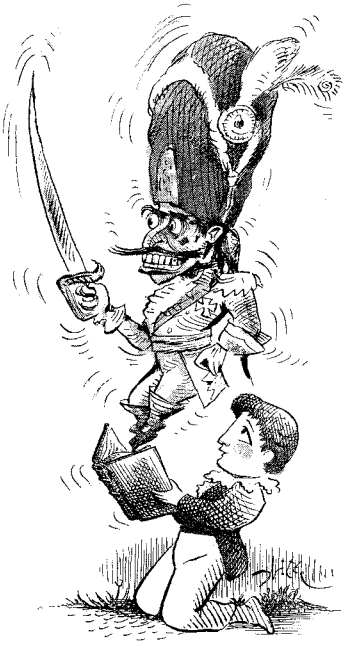
OFF THE TRACK

Twenty-eight artists inspired by New York City's underground transit have participated in "Subterranean Subjects," an all-subway-related art show on view until January 20 at the Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand Street (open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from noon to 6). Some of the works remind us of how grim the subway can be: Vernita Nemec's four postcard-size images of station squalor bear the words "no ktchn no fee no security no bath"; and in Willie Birch's Groomsian papier-mâché subway-car diorama a man can be seen begging—the piece is captioned "I Am A Vietnam Veteran. I Have Agent Orange. I Am Homeless. I've Had . . ." Other works explore the subway's splendors: Steven Siegel's hypnotic video "Dream City" reveals the view from the front of a speeding A train, as the passing lights seem to explode into white sparks; and the captions on Siochain Hughes' black-and-white views of tracks and tunnels sound like real-estate ads—"an elegant track change," for example, or "a serene section of the Lexington Avenue Local." And for anyone nostalgic for the heyday of subway graffiti there's Luiz Cruz Azaceta's colorful "Subway Series" (1974), paintings in which crocodiles, bare-breasted women, and outstretched hands and feet burst from the windows of paint-scrawled cars.



English children's books at the Morgan Library

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Montano will come in a few times to clean the floors and the bathrooms. Matthew McCaslin has built a little studio and storage space. For the observer the atmosphere in this slick gallery space is very bizarre, like watching the boy in the plastic bubble. Sean Landers is represented by his maniacally entertaining videotapes of himself in a process of perpetual change, reworking his appearance so that he wavers between Charles Manson and Jim Morrison. Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ An installation by Mitchell Kane that simulates a self-service counter. Although somewhat dull, it includes some attractive paintings of lists of ingredients for such dishes as "Sesame Quailbirds with Batger's Orange Jelly," with mesmerizing enamel surfaces. Through Jan. 5. (130 Prince St.)

"THE DEFINITIVE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN QUILT"—Forty-three examples by quiltmakers from around the country, in a show meant to dispel the usual assumptions about the medium. There's nothing here that you'd curl up under. Materials include everything from quills and buttons to watercolor and acrylic. Ten of the forty-eight artists represented are men. And such techniques as welding, photograph transfer, and assemblage replace time-honored stitchery. Among the many innovative works is Joanne Hammer's "Arcadian Myths," a tracery of metal strips painted in muted tones; within a border of a repetitive image of a fish is a leafy abstract landscape with animal and plant life. So sculptural is the piece that a viewer may well ask—as you do of other works—why quilt? Bernice Steinbaum would say, "We're just talking about artists with extended palettes." Through Jan. 5. (Steinbaum, 132 Greene St.)

SHORT LIST—DEBORAH BUTTERFIELD, Thorp, 103 Prince St. (through Jan. 19); KEITH HARING and JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT, Shafrazi, 130 Prince St. (through Feb. 9); BRUCE KURLAND, Munroe, 130 Prince St. (through Jan. 19); HELMUT MIDDENDORF, Nosei, 100 Prince St. (through Jan. 12); CLAES OLDENBURG AND COOSJE VAN BRUGGEN, Castelli, 420 West Broadway (through Jan. 12); DAVID PARRISH, Meisel, 141 Prince St. (through Jan. 25, except Jan. 2); JUDY RIFKA, Alexander, 59 Wooster St. (through Jan. 5); ALAN SCARRITT, Lorence-Monk, 578 Broadway (through Jan. 26); ROBERT WATTS, Castelli, 578 Broadway (through Jan. 12).

PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTOFIND, at 138 Spring Street, has a show on through January 12—"New York . . . When It Was Fun!"—that's a call to diehard New Yorkers and to those who think "the city's a nice place to visit, but . . ." When you walk into this intimate little gallery, you'll see walls jam-packed with photos of goings on about town from the eighteen-eighties through the nineteen-fifties. On view are old favorites as well as some surprises, and all the pictures capture the spirit of this place that invites so many people to come and reinvent themselves. Where else but New York would we find such graffiti as "I protest everything, including my existence and especially yours," the chalk-written declaration that fills an Esther Bubley picture from 1940? Where else would one see a snappily dressed goose checking out a postcard stand? This shot, of course, is from the town's most headline-oriented chronicler, Weegee. Another picture by Weegee will please those who, like us, feel that New York gets an unfair rap. It's of a sign that reads "NEW YORK IS A FRIENDLY TOWN."

One thing's for sure: judging from a 1948 Andreas Feininger photograph, traffic hasn't got any worse lately. This picture shows a Fifth Avenue view to end all gridlock shots. You can just hear the horns, the expletives, the confessions of "What are we, crazy to live here?"

HERMAN LEONARD—Moody, smoky photographs of jazz musicians, taken in the forties and fifties. Through Jan. 5. (Sikkema, 155 Spring St. Opens at noon on Saturdays.)

PIERRE ET GILLES—In their first solo show in America these two artists, whose hallmark is high-tech painted photography, concentrate on imagery that illustrates, in an inimitable way, the stories of saints. Certainly not alone in their use of Pop, camp, and kitsch styles, Pierre et Gilles nevertheless achieve their own seamless, over-the-top integration of these elements. Through Jan. 8. (Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

SHORT LIST—ANSEL ADAMS, International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (open Tuesdays, except New Year's Day, noon to 8; Wednesdays through Fridays, noon to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6; through Feb. 3); BRUCE OF LOS ANGELES, Wessel O'Connor, 580 Broadway (through Jan. 12); KEITH CARTER, Witkin, 415 West Broadway (opens at noon on Saturdays, through Jan. 12); IRVING PENN, Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 19); ELIOT PORTER, Danziger, 415 West Broadway (through Jan. 12); EZRA STOLLER, Seagram Building, fourth floor, 375 Park Ave., at 52nd St. (closed Saturdays, through Jan. 25); RAYMOND VOINQUEL, Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway (through Jan. 26).

MUSIC

A FRIEND who teaches at the Mannes College of Music, on West 85th Street, writes:

"Paul Echols, who runs opera here, is allergic to business-as-usual. He's the one who more or less makes up stage pieces from the Renaissance and before—quilts them together from a chanson here and a rondel there. He seems to have the idea that, instead of passing on performance tradition to his singers, he should do pieces with *no* performance tradition. Now it's to be a new opera, freshly commissioned from a friend of his, Roger Trefousse. It seems Trefousse was on a trip to Maine, and he started gathering little *trouvailles* from roadside signs, local papers, façades of businesses, and whatnot, with the idea of stringing the words together into nonsense text for a cantata. When Echols's commission came in, he made it into an opera in six scenes, which he calls 'Found Objects.' The scenes are: (1) in New York City, getting ready for a trip to Maine; (2) in Maine; (3) on Interstate 95, en route back to New York; (4) back in New York; (5) in a Holiday Inn, on the way back to Maine; (6) in Maine again. The text is surreal, the music is subtext, and Echols, who's directing the performances (January 6 and 7 at Mannes), has given it a sort of scenario. One of the characters is called Roger Xerox, and he's supposed to represent the composer. There are three characters but six singers, each of whom might play any of the characters at a given time, sometimes in groups. The accompaniment is for ten instruments. I hear the students talking about it in the corridors (one of them calls it 'Lost Pitches,' because it's apparently a little hard for the singers to learn). They seem to be having fun, and the idea is intriguing. I hope it doesn't turn out to be airheaded self-indulgence, because we at the school think the prospect of having new operas here is great. Echols wants to see it happen every other year, and he says Lee Hoiby has agreed to do the next one."

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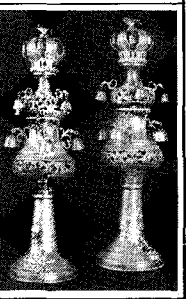
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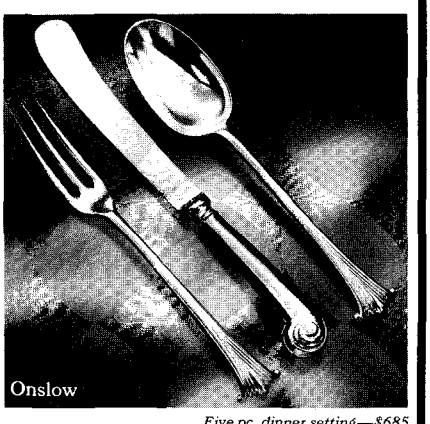

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OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—**ANDREA CHÉNIER,** with Stefka Evstatieva, Vladimir Popov, and Sherrill Milnes; conducted by Julius Rudel. (Dec. 31 at 8.) . . . With Maria Gulegina, Lando Bartolini, and Sherrill Milnes; Julius Rudel. (Jan. 3 and Jan. 7 at 8.) . . . **LA TRAVIATA,** with Marilyn Mims, Neil Rosenshein, and Brian Shexnayder; Rico Saccani. (Jan. 1 and Jan. 5 at 8.) . . . **FAUST,** with Diana Soviero, Susan Quittmeyer, Richard Leech, Gino Quilico, and James Morris; Thomas Fulton. (Jan. 2 at 8 and Jan. 5 at 1:30.) . . . With a soprano to be announced, Susan Quittmeyer, Neil Rosenshein, Thomas Woodman, and Samuel Ramey; Thomas Fulton. (Jan. 8 at 8.) . . . **RIGOLETTO,** with Hei-Kyung Hong, Taro Ichihara, and Frederick Burchinal; Guido Ajmone-Marsan. (Jan. 4 at 8.) . . . With Hei-Kyung Hong, Richard Leech, and Juan Pons; Guido Ajmone-Marsan. (Jan. 9 at 8.)

FLYING HORSE HONAN OPERA TROUPE—The thirty-two singers and instrumentalists of this Taiwanese ensemble perform "The Romance of the Embroidered Sachet," a traditional Chinese opera. (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 4 at 7:30.)

AMATO OPERA COMPANY—In its final performances of "Die Fledermaus." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Jan. 5 at 7:30 and Jan. 6 at 2:30.)

"FOUND OBJECTS"—The première of a chamber opera by Roger Trefousse, who conducts the Mannes Opera Ensemble in this staging. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Jan. 6 at 4 and 7, and Jan. 7 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

OPERA ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK—A concert performance of Donizetti's "Roberto Devereux," with soprano Mara Zampieri, mezzo-soprano Stella Zambalis, tenor Fernando de la Mora, and baritone Vladimir Chernov. Eve Queler conducts. (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 9 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—At Avery Fisher Hall. Dec. 31 at 8: Zubin Mehta conducts a lighthearted program of von Suppé, Meyerbeer, Verdi, Johann Strauss, and Bernstein; with soprano June Anderson. . . . ¶ Jan. 3 and 5 at 8, and Jan. 4 at 11 A.M.: Jerome Lowenthal is the soloist in the first New York performance of Liszt's "Piano Concerto No. 3," a work reconstructed by musicologist Jay Rosenblatt from sketches and drafts apparently completed by Liszt in 1839. Also on the program are Haydn's D-Major Piano Concerto (with Mr. Lowenthal) and Bruckner's Seventh Symphony. Zubin Mehta conducts. . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 8: Charles Dutoit conducts Schumann's Fourth Symphony, Kodály's "Variations on a Hungarian Folksong," and Dutilleux's Cello Concerto (subtitled "Tout un Monde Lointain"), with Lynn Harrell.

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA—David Zinman conducts premières of works by Eric Stokes and Michael Torke (his "Bronze," for piano and orchestra, with the composer as soloist); the New York première of "Before Infrared," by Kamran Ince; and Samuel Barber's "Symphony No. 1 in One Movement." (Carnegie Hall. Jan 6 at 3.)

RECITALS

LEONARD BERNSTEIN MEMORIAL—A tribute to the late Maestro, with performances by notable soloists and an orchestra of players from youth orchestras founded by Mr. Bernstein in Germany, Japan, and the United States. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. Dec. 31 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

BARGEMUSIC—Solo and chamber works by Mozart, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Jan. 3 at 7:30 and Jan. 6 at 4.)

NANCY GARNIEZ—The pianist performs works by Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, and Jack Beeson. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Jan. 5 at 5:30.)

CUARTETO LATINOAMERICANO—The Mexican ensemble performs the four string quartets (all composed between 1930 and 1932) of Silvestre Revueltas. A violinist and conductor, Revueltas had also become recognized as one of Mexico's leading composers by the time of his death, in 1940, at the age of forty-one. (New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West, at 77th St. Jan. 5 at 7:30. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Carlos Prieto

GUARNERI QUARTET—Three of the group's members play a Beethoven trio and, with pianist Seymour Lipkin, quartets by Mozart and Schumann. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Jan. 5 at 8.)

DHARMA SWARA BALINESE GAMELAN—Music and dances of Bali, performed by the Indonesian Consulate's twenty-member ensemble. The gamelan—a percussion orchestra of metal instruments—is overseen by Idewa Made Martawan. The concert features works in the *gong kebyar* ("rising flame") style, exemplified by dramatic musical juxtapositions and energetic tempos. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 5 at 8.)

CLAIRE POLIN—Seven of this composer's works (including "Walum Olum" and "Freltic Sonata") are performed by a chamber ensemble. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 5 at 8:30.)

JERRY GROSSMAN—The cellist, who was a member of the Chicago Symphony before assuming the principal cello chair at the Metropolitan Opera, performs J. S. Bach's six suites for unaccompanied cello. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Jan. 6 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

SCOTT REISS—The recorder player performs such diverse works as Berio's "Gesti," Incan flute music, and Tin Pan Alley arrangements. (The Amsterdam Room, 171 W. 85th St. Jan. 6 at 8. For ticket information, call 580-7234.)

JULIE HOLTZMAN—Piano, spotlighting the keyboard works of Franz Xaver Mozart, the youngest of Wolfgang Amadeus's sons, born five months before his father's death in 1791. He, too, was an early bloomer, publishing his first opus when he was eleven. Ironically, he studied with Antonio Salieri, Mozart *père's* nemesis, who predicted a career "not inferior to that of his celebrated father"—a prognostication that proved rather wide of the mark. The program includes two "Polonaises Mélancoliques," an "Air Russe Varié," a piano quartet, and a concerto. With assisting artists. A benefit concert. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 6 at 8:30.)

CARLOS PRIETO—The Mexican cellist, assisted by pianist Doris Stevenson, performs music by his compatriots, among them Manuel Ponce, Carlos Chávez, and Manuel Enríquez. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 7 at 8.).

EDUARDUS HALIM—The Indonesian pianist performs music by Bach/Busoni, Chopin (his Op. 25 Études), and Liszt (including his B-Minor Sonata). Presented by Young Concert Artists. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Jan. 8 at 8.)

PARNASSUS—Anthony Korf directs the chamber ensemble in music by Milton Babbitt, Charles Wuorinen, and Will Ogdon; and mezzo-soprano Charlotte Hellekant joins the group for Prokofiev's "Five Songs of Anna Akhmatova" and Miriam Gideon's "Five Songs from the Greek." (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 8 at 8.)

LARS ANDERS TOMTER—The Norwegian violist, accompanied by Leif Ove Andsnes, performs music by Nielsen, Britten, Brahms, and others. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 8 at 8.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

NEW YORK CITY GAY MEN'S CHORUS POPS ENSEMBLE—With Terri White. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. Jan. 4-5 at 7:30 and 10. Tickets at the door on the nights of the concerts.)

"HEAVENLY JAZZ"—Presenting Dave McKenna. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. Jan. 6 at 5. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

"LYRICS & LYRICISTS"—The first program in this season's series, which is devoted to the music of Richard Rodgers, features songs from "The Garrick Gaieties" and "Oklahoma!" With David Gaines, Jason Graae, Rebecca Luker, Joyce Lyons, Sally Mayes, Tarik Winston, and Bruce Hubbard. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Jan. 6 at 2:30 and 8, and Jan. 7 at 2 and 8.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

RANGERS—Vs. the Soviet Union's Central Red Army team, Dec. 31 at 1:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Los Angeles Kings, Jan. 2 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Philadelphia Flyers, Jan. 7 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the St. Louis Blues, Jan. 9 at 7:30.

ISLANDERS—Vs. the Quebec Nordiques, Dec. 31 at 2:05. . . . ¶ Vs. the Los Angeles Kings, Jan. 3 at 7:35. . . . ¶ Vs. the Philadelphia Flyers, Jan. 5 at 7:35. . . . ¶ Vs. the Minnesota North Stars, Jan. 8 at 7:35.

DEVILS—Vs. the Soviet Union's Dynamo Moscow team, Jan. 6. . . . ¶ Vs. the St. Louis Blues, Jan. 8. (Game time, 7:45.)

KNICKS—Vs. the Denver Nuggets, Jan. 3. . . . ¶ Vs. the Los Angeles Clippers, Jan. 6. . . . ¶ Vs. the Boston Celtics, Jan. 8. (Game time, 7:30.)

NETS—Vs. the San Antonio Spurs, Jan. 4 at 8. . . . ¶ Vs. the Dallas Mavericks, Jan. 7 at 7:30.

(The Rangers and the Knicks play at Madison Square Garden, 563-8300; the Islanders at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Devils and the Nets at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

RACING

HORSES—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 12:30. . . . **TROTTING** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8, and Tuesdays at 1. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"THE BATTLE OF THE MONSTER TRUCKS"—Better than a tractor pull, this competition pits humongous trucks against each other in two and a half feet of mud. Who has the best traction? As a side event, motocross riders will compete in daring jumps and turns. (Madison Square Garden. 563-8300. Jan. 4 at 7:30 and Jan. 5 at 1:30 and 7:30.)

BOATS—Belated Christmas shoppers can look in at the eighty-first New York National Boat Show, which is billed this year as a place for "one-stop shopping"—sort of like a nautical mall. Yachts, fishing boats, radar, rowing sculls, engines, charts, and floating hats will be among the marine merchandise available. (Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, Eleventh Ave. between 34th and 39th Sts. Jan. 5-13. For information, call 684-6622.)

ICED OVER—Holden Caufield's inquiry: " 'Hey, Horowitz,' I said. 'You ever pass by the lagoon in Central Park? Down by Central Park South? . . . Well, you know the ducks that swim around in it? In the springtime and all? Do you happen to know where they go in the wintertime, by any chance?' " On Jan. 6 at 2, the Central Park Rangers will finally answer what we have always considered to be one of Life's Big Questions. They'll talk about fish and algae, too. Meets at Central Park West and 100th St.

BOAR'S HEAD AND YULE LOG FESTIVAL—An annual tradition at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, with jugglers, pipers, processions, and a mummer's play. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 662-2133. Jan. 4 at 7:30; Jan. 5 at 1:30, 4:30, and 7:30; and Jan. 6 at 3:30.)

WALKING TOURS—Sponsored by Adventure on a Shoestring: Jan. 5 at 1, a walk through Brooklyn Heights, and Jan. 6 at 1, a walk around the Wall Street area. Call 265-2663 for information and reservations.

READING—Dramatizations of short stories by Saki will be read by Denis Holmes, Russell Leib, Elizabeth Logun, and others. (New York Public Library, at Lincoln Center. Jan. 7-9 at 4. No tickets necessary.)

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "To Sleep with Anger" (†).
Theatre 2: "Come See the Paradise" (directed by Alan Parker), with Dennis Quaid and Tamlyn Tomita.
Theatre 3: "Vincent & Theo" (†).
Theatre 4: "Mermaids" (Richard Benjamin), with Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci.
Theatre 5: "The Russia House" (†).
Theatre 6: "Metropolitan" (Whit Stillman), with Edward Clements, Carolyn Farina, Christopher Eigeman, and Taylor Nichols.

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
(Separate admissions) "Company" (1970, D. A. Pennebaker), with Dean Jones, Barbara Barrie, and George Coe; and "She's Been Away" (1989, Peter Hall), with Peggy Ashcroft, Geraldine James, and James Fox.

Wieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-0600)
Theatre 1: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.
Theatre 2: "Look Who's Talking Too" (Amy Heckerling), with John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, and Olympia Dukakis.
Theatre 3: "The Bonfire of the Vanities" (Brian De Palma), with Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "The Russia House" (†).
Theatre 2: "Dances with Wolves" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Godfather Part III" (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.
Theatre 4: "Almost an Angel" (John Cornell), with Paul Hogan.
Theatre 5: "Dances with Wolves" (†).
Theatre 6: "Look Who's Talking Too" (Amy Heckerling), with John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, and Olympia Dukakis.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: "The Bonfire of the Vanities" (Brian De Palma), with Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.
Theatre 2: "The Bonfire of the Vanities."
Theatre 3: "The Sheltering Sky" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Field" (Jim Sheridan), with Richard Harris, John Hurt, Tom Berenger, Brenda Fricker, and Sean Bean.

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "The Godfather Part III" (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.
Theatre 2: "Almost an Angel" (John Cornell), with Paul Hogan.
Theatre 3: "Mermaids" (Richard Benjamin), with Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Awakenings" (Penny Marshall), with Robert De Niro and Robin Williams.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"GoodFellas" (†).

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "The Bonfire of the Vanities" (Brian De Palma), with Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.
Theatre 2: "The Bonfire of the Vanities."

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Come See the Paradise" (Alan Parker), with Dennis Quaid and Tamlyn Tomita.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Cyrano de Bergerac" (Jean-Paul Rappeneau, in French), with Gérard Depardieu.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.
Theatre 2: "Kindergarten Cop."

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Misery" (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.
Theatre 2: "Awakenings" (Penny Marshall), with Robert De Niro and Robin Williams.

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "Green Card" (Peter Weir), with Gérard Depardieu and Andie MacDowell.
Theatre 2: "Mr. & Mrs. Bridge" (†).
Theatre 3: "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Look Who's Talking Too" (Amy Heckerling), with John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, and Olympia Dukakis.
Theatre 2: "The Rookie" (Clint Eastwood), with Eastwood and Charlie Sheen.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"Havana" (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "The Russia House" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Godfather Part III" (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Hamlet" (Franco Zeffirelli), with Mel Gibson, Glenn Close, Alan Bates, and Paul Scofield.

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Dances with Wolves" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"The Godfather Part III" (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.
Theatre 2: "Misery" (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "The Rookie" (Clint Eastwood), with Eastwood and Charlie Sheen.
Theatre 2: "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 1: "From Russia with Rock" (1988, directed by Marjaana Mykkanen; in Russian and English). From Jan. 2: "Solovki Power" (1988, Marina Goldovskaya; in Russian), a documentary.
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: Through Jan. 3: (Separate admissions) "Kiss Me Kate" (†); and "Akira" (Katsuhiro Otomo), a Japanese animated science-fiction film. From Jan. 4: "Muhammad Ali, The Greatest" (1964 and 1974, William Klein), a documentary.

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "Misery" (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.
Theatre 2: "Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
"Hamlet" (Franco Zeffirelli), with Mel Gibson, Glenn Close, and Alan Bates.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "The Godfather Part III" (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.
Theatre 2: "Havana" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "The Rescuers Down Under" (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Cinema Paradiso" (Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian), with Philippe Noiret and Salvatore Cascio.
Theatre 3: "GoodFellas" (†).
Theatre 4: "Reversal of Fortune" (†).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "Misery" (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.
Theatre 2: "Havana" (†).
Theatre 3: "Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.
Theatre 4: "The Bonfire of the Vanities" (Brian De Palma), with Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.
Theatre 5: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.
Theatre 6: "Kindergarten Cop."
Theatre 7: "Come See the Paradise" (Alan Parker), with Dennis Quaid and Tamlyn Tomita.
Theatre 8: "The Long Walk Home" (Richard Pearce), with Sissy Spacek and Whoopi Goldberg.
Theatre 9: "Mermaids" (Richard Benjamin), with Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1. "Hidden Agenda" (Ken Loach), with Frances McDormand, Brian Cox, and Brad Dourif.
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "The Rescuers Down Under" (Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Predator 2" (Stephen Hopkins), with Danny Glover and Gary Busey.
Theatre 3: "Avalon" (†).

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"The Russia House" (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "Hidden Agenda" (Ken Loach), with Frances McDormand.
Theatre 2: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.
Theatre 3: "Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.
Theatre 4: "Cinema Paradiso" (Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian), with Philippe Noiret and Salvatore Cascio.
Theatre 5: "Misery" (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.
Theatre 6: "Postcards from the Edge" (†).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"Edward Scissorhands" (†).

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Mermaids" (Richard Benjamin), with Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci.

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"The Sheltering Sky" (†).

Carnegie Hall Cinema, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
"The Long Walk Home" (Richard Pearce), with Sissy Spacek and Whoopi Goldberg.

Carnegie Screening Room, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131)
"The Long Walk Home" (Richard Pearce), with Sissy Spacek and Whoopi Goldberg.

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"Alice" (†).

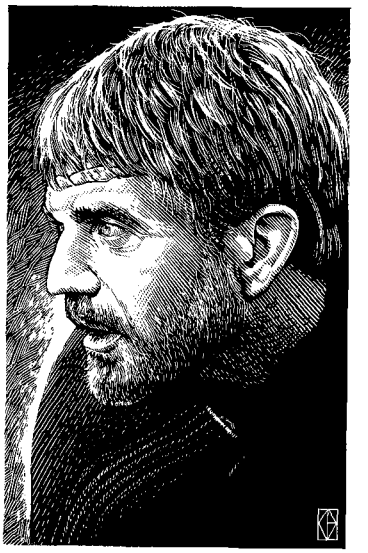
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Almost an Angel" (John Cornell).

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Dances with Wolves" (†).

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 15.



Mel Gibson as "Hamlet"

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MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Awakenings" (Penny Marshall), with Robert De Niro and Robin Williams.

LINCOLN PLAZA 1, 2, AND 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "The Nasty Girl" (Michael Verhoeven; in German), with Lena Stolze.
Theatre 2: "Freeze—Die—Come to Life" (Vitaly Kanevski; in Russian).
Theatre 3: Through Jan. 3: "L'Atalante" (†). From Jan. 4: "Jesus of Montreal" (Denys Arcand; in French), with Lothaire Bluteau.

REGENCY, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Havana" (†).

LOEWS 84TH STREET SIXPLEX, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Mermaids" (Richard Benjamin), with Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci.
Theatre 2: "Look Who's Talking Too" (Amy Heckerling), with John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, and Olympia Dukakis.
Theatre 3: "The Russia House" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Bonfire of the Vanities" (Brian De Palma), with Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.
Theatre 5: "Almost an Angel" (John Cornell), with Paul Hogan.
Theatre 6: "The Godfather Part III" (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.

METRO CINEMA 1 AND 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.
Theatre 2: "Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

OLYMPIA I AND II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.
Theatre 2: "Misery" (Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

CRITERION CENTER, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Misery" (directed by Rob Reiner), with James Caan and Kathy Bates.
Theatre 2: "Predator 2" (Stephen Hopkins), with Danny Glover and Gary Busey.
Theatre 3: "The Bonfire of the Vanities" (Brian De Palma), with Tom Hanks, Bruce Willis, and Melanie Griffith.
Theatre 4: "Misery."
Theatre 5: "GoodFellas" (†).
Theatre 6: "Look Who's Talking Too" (Amy Heckerling), with John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, and Olympia Dukakis.

EMBASSY 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"Three Men and a Little Lady" (Emile Ardolino), with Tom Selleck, Steve Guttenberg, and Ted Danson.

EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "Almost an Angel" (John Cornell), with Paul Hogan.
Theatre 2: "Mermaids" (Richard Benjamin), with Cher, Bob Hoskins, Winona Ryder, and Christina Ricci.
Theatre 3: (Matinées only) "The Rescuers Down Under"; and (evenings only) "Rocky V" (John G. Avildsen), with Sylvester Stallone.

LOEWS ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"The Godfather Part III" (Francis Ford Coppola), with Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire, and Andy Garcia.

NATIONAL TWIN, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "Home Alone" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin.
Theatre 2: "Kindergarten Cop" (Ivan Reitman), with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

WEST SIDE CINEMA 1 AND 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)
Theatre 1: "The Rookie" (Clint Eastwood), with Eastwood and Charlie Sheen.
Theatre 2: "Reversal of Fortune" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

BIOGRAPH CINEMA, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)
Through Jan. 1: "Show Boat" (1936, directed by James Whale), with Irene Dunne, Helen Morgan, Allan Jones, Paul Robeson, and Charles Winninger; and "The Awful Truth" (1937, Leo McCarey), with Dunne, Cary Grant, and Ralph Bellamy.
Jan. 2-3: "The Great Lover" (1931, Harry Beaumont), with Adolphe Menjou, Irene Dunne, Neil Hamilton, and Olga Baclanova; and "The Secret of Madame Blanche" (1933, Charles Brabin), with Dunne, Phillips Holmes, and Lionel Atwill.
Jan. 4-5: "Penny Serenade" (†) and "Together Again" (†).
Jan. 6-7: "Anna and the King of Siam" (see blurb below); and "A Guy Named Joe" (1943, Victor Fleming), with Spencer Tracy, Irene Dunne, Ward Bond, and Van Johnson.
Jan. 8-9: "The White Cliffs of Dover" (†); and "Love Affair" (1939, Leo McCarey), with Irene Dunne, Charles Boyer, and Maria Ouspenskaya.

CINEMA VILLAGE, 3rd Ave. between 12th and 13th. (505-7320)
Through Jan. 1: "sex, lies, and videotape" (1989, Steven Soderbergh), with James Spader, Peter Gallagher, Andie MacDowell, and Laura San Giacomo; and "Scandal" (1989, Michael Caton-Jones), with John Hurt, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, Ian McKellen, and Bridget Fonda.
Jan. 2-5: "In the Realm of the Senses" (1977, Nagisa Oshima; in Japanese), with Eiko Matsuda and Tatsuya Fuji; and "Empire of Passion" (1980, Oshima; in Japanese).
Jan. 6-8: "The Leopard" (†).
From Jan. 9: "Cinema Paradiso" (Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian), with Philippe Noiret and Salvatore Cascio; and "The Little Thief" (1989, Claude Miller; in French).

One of the most piquant details in the PBS series "The Civil War" is the King of Siam's offer to send Abraham Lincoln elephants to help fight the Confederacy. The trailblazing monarch who made that offer is the subject of the engrossing 1946 historical drama "Anna and the King of Siam" (playing January 6-7 at the Biograph Cinema), Rex Harrison's first Hollywood movie. Throughout the film, the Siamese ruler tries to prove his enlightenment to the Western powers who are preparing to carve up his domain. The King's intellectual grasp of Lincoln becomes a source of pride. The last sentence he starts on his deathbed is a quote from Honest Abe: "True progress must bear some relation to man's character; it must have its roots in his heart."

This unconventional platonic romance between the King and his children's governess, Anna (Irene Dunne), who also tutors his wives and becomes his confidante and adviser, is a movie of enduring charm. The narrative is ungainly and the film overlong (it clocks in at a hundred and twenty-eight minutes). The director, John Cromwell, fails to exploit the deluxe interior decoration (by Lyle Wheeler and William Darling, with Thomas Little and Frank E. Hughes) and the black-and-white cinematography (by Arthur Miller), both of which won Academy Awards. Cromwell even fought with Harrison over the star's characterization. But Harrison came through anyway, with a galvanizing, unpredictable hauteur. Even when he stoops, he towers. His nervous strut and his overenunciated chatter express the quirkiness that can grow in aristocratic isolation. Although Dunne doesn't equal him, her firm Victorian widow is a suitable foil, and their dialogue has a fetching comic gravity. When the King assumes that the rulers of all countries are above the law, and Anna sets him straight, the scene plays like a benign version of Diane Sawyer instructing Sadaam Hussein on the limits of executive power.

FILM FORUM 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Through Jan. 3: "Funny Face" (1957, Stanley Donen), with Audrey Hepburn, Fred Astaire, Kay Thompson, and Michel Auclair; and "Breakfast at Tiffany's" (1961, Blake Edwards), with Hepburn, George Peppard, Patricia Neal, Buddy Ebsen, Martin Balsam, and Mickey Rooney.
From Jan. 4: "Breathless" (1959, Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Jean Seberg and Jean-Paul Belmondo.

THEATRE 80 ST. MARKS, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Through Jan. 1: "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" (1967, David Swift), with Robert Morse, Michele Lee, and Rudy Vallée; and "The Producers" (1968, Mel Brooks), with Zero Mostel, Gene Wilder, Dick Shawn, and Estelle Winwood.
Jan. 2: "Jezebel" (1938, William Wyler), with Bette Davis, Henry Fonda, George Brent, and Fay Bainter; and "The Letter" (1940, William Wyler), with Davis, Herbert Marshall, Gale Sondergaard, James Stephenson, and Frieda Inescort.
Jan. 3: "Fahrenheit 451" (†); and "Silent Running" (1972, Douglas Trumbull), with Bruce Dern and Cliff Potts.
Jan. 4-5: "Rope" (1948, Alfred Hitchcock), with James Stewart, John Dall, and Farley Granger; and "The Man Who Never Was" (1956, Hitchcock), with Stewart and Doris Day.
Jan. 6: "The Front" (†); and "Mickey One" (1965, Arthur Penn), with Warren Beatty.
Jan. 7: "The Decameron" (1971, Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian), with Franco Citti, Ninetto Davoli, and Pasolini; and "The Canterbury Tales" (1972, Pasolini; in Italian), with Hugh Griffith, Alan Webb, and Jenny Runacre.
Jan. 8: "The Reckless Moment" (1949, Max Ophuls), with James Mason and Joan Bennett; and "Caught" (†).
Jan. 9: "The Cat and the Canary" (1939, Elliott Nugent), with Paulette Goddard, Bob Hope, John Beal, and Douglass Montgomery; and "The Ghost Breakers" (1940, George Marshall), with Goddard, Hope, Paul Lukas, and Richard Carlson.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Dec. 31 at 2:30: "The Summer of Miss Forbes" (1988, directed by Jaime Humberto Hermosillo; a Mexican film, in Spanish), with Hanna Schygulla. . . . ¶ Jan. 1 at 2: "The White Tower" (1950, Ted Tetzlaff), with Glenn Ford, Claude Rains, and Cedric Hardwicke. . . . ¶ Jan. 1 at 2:30: "Little Nemo" (1911), an animated film; "A Tale of Two Cities" (1911, William Humphrey), with Florence Turner, Maurice Costello, and Norma Talmadge; and other early American silent films. . . . ¶ Jan. 1 at 5: "The Murder Man" (1934, Tim Whelan), with Spencer Tracy, Virginia Bruce, and James Stewart. . . . ¶ Jan. 1 at 5: "The Cry of the Children" (1912), with James Cruze; "The Gangster" (1912), with Fatty Arbuckle; and other early American silent films. . . . ¶ Jan. 2 at 2:30: "The Murder Man." . . . ¶ Jan. 3 at 3 and 6: "Lifting the Blackout: Images of North Korea" (1989, Erika Anderson), a documentary. . . . ¶ Jan. 3 at 6: "The White Tower." . . . ¶ Jan. 4 at 2: "The Birth of a Nation" (1915, D. W. Griffith; silent), with Henry Walthall, Lillian Gish, and Mae Marsh. . . . ¶ Jan. 4 at 2:30: "Waltz in Old Havana" (1989, Luis Felipe Bernaza; a Cuban film). . . . ¶ Jan. 4 at 6: "Greed" (1924, Erich von Stroheim; silent), with Gibson Gowland, Jean Hersholt, and ZaSu Pitts. . . . ¶ Jan. 4 at 6 "Supporting Roles" (1989, Orlando Rojas; a Cuban film). . . . ¶ Jan. 5 at 1: "The Gold Rush" (1925, Charlie Chaplin; silent), with Chaplin, Mack Swain, and Georgia Hale. . . . ¶ Jan. 5 at 2: "Waltz in Old Havana." . . . ¶ Jan. 5 at 4: "The Birth of a Nation." . . . ¶ Jan. 5 at 5 and Jan. 6 at 2: "Supporting Roles." . . . ¶ Jan. 6 at 3: "Intolerance" (1916, D. W. Griffith; silent), with Mae Marsh, Robert Harron, and Lillian Gish. . . . ¶ Jan. 6 at 5: "Waltz in Old Havana." . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 2:30: "Greed." . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 6: "Intolerance." . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 6:30: "Force of Circumstance" (1990), directed by Liza Bear, who will be present. . . . ¶ Jan. 8 at 2:30: "The Priest and the Man" (J. Searle Bowley); "The Mothering Heart" (D. W. Griffith), with Lillian Gish; and other early American silent films. . . .

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¶ Jan. 8 at 6: "Nanook of the North" (1922, Robert J. Flaherty), a documentary.

Museum of Broadcasting, 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—Programs about contemporary comedians and people who influenced them. Robert Klein: Jan. 2-5: "Robert Klein: Child of the '50s—Man of the '80s" (1984, HBO) and "Bilko the Art Lover" (1958, CBS), an episode of "The Phil Silvers Show."... ¶ From Jan. 8: Excerpts from three Klein television specials and from shows with Carl Reiner, Lenny Bruce, Sid Caesar, Steve Allen, Jonathan Winters, and Alan King. Showings Tuesdays at 12:15 and 5:30 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 12:15.

Anthology Film Archives, 32-34 Second Ave., at Second St. (477-2714)—Jan. 2 at 7: "Fireworks," "Rabbit's Moon," and three other short films by Kenneth Anger.... ¶ Jan. 2 at 9:30: "On the Bowery" (1956, Lionel Rogosin) and "Portrait of Jason" (1967, Shirley Clarke).... ¶ Jan. 3 at 7: "Scorpio Rising," "Lucifer Rising," and two other short films by Anger.... ¶ Jan. 3 at 8:30: "The Cool World" (1963, Clarke) and "On the Bowery."... ¶ Jan. 4 at 7: "Mass for the Dakota Sioux" and "Quixote," both directed by Bruce Baillie.... ¶ Jan. 4 at 8:30: "Come Back, Africa" (1960, Rogosin) and "Portrait of Jason."... ¶ Jan. 5 at 4: "The Cool World."... ¶ Jan. 5 at 6: A program of short films by Jordan Belson, Douglass Crockwell, and Baillie.... ¶ Jan. 5 at 7:30: "Hallelujah the Hills" (1962, Adolfas Mekas) and "Chafed Elbows" (1966, Robert Downey, Sr.).... ¶ Jan. 6 at 5: "Hallelujah the Hills" and "Going Home" (1971, Mekas).... ¶ Jan. 6 at 8: "Quick Billy" (1970, Baillie).... ¶ Jan. 9 at 7: "The Quiet One" (Sidney Meyers, Janice Loeb, and Helen Levitt) and "The Wind Is Driving Him Toward the Open Sea" (1968, David Brooks).... ¶ Jan. 9 at 9: "Desistfilm," "Reflections on Black," and four other short films by Stan Brakhage.

Donnell Library Center, 20 W. 53rd St. (621-0619)—Dec. 31 at 2:30: "The Magic Flute" (1975, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish).... ¶ Jan. 3 at noon: "Chronicle of a Summer" (1961, Jean Rouch).... ¶ Jan. 8 at noon: "The Bespoke Overcoat" (1955, Jack Clayton), and three other short films on the theme of ghosts.... ¶ Jan. 8 at 2:30: "The Cheat" (1915, Cecil B. De Mille; silent) and "Broken Blossoms" (1919, D. W. Griffith; silent).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—In either the Riklis Theatre or the Warner Communications Screening Room. Jan. 2-4 at 2: Two different programs in the series "Betty Boop & the Fleischer Cartoon Studio."

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—"To Take the Glamour Out of War: American Film Against the War in Vietnam." Jan. 2 and 5 at 2: "No Vietnamese Ever Called Me Nigger" (1968, David Loeb Weiss) and "New Left Note" (1968 and 1982, Saul Levine; silent).... ¶ Jan. 4 at 2: "America" (1969) and "In the Year of the Pig" (1969, Emile de Antonio).... ¶ Jan. 3 and 6 at 2: "Peace March" (1976, Anthony Reveaux) and "Hearts and Minds" (1974, Peter Davis).

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.

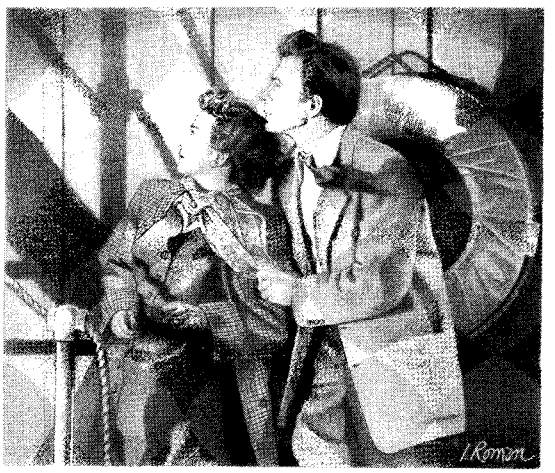
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Terrence Rafferty.)

Alice—Woody Allen's latest picture is an awkward blend of whimsy and moralizing. The title character, played by Mia Farrow, is a pampered Upper East Side lady-who-lunches. She lives in a huge apartment with her handsome husband (William Hurt), her adorable children, and a staff, and she looks terrific. But her life, the movie tells us, is totally empty and false. A Chinatown doctor (Keye Luke) gives her a variety of herbal remedies to knock the yuppie malaise out of her system. One of them makes her invisible; one makes her irresistible to men; and so on. As these fantasy episodes mount up, Alice begins to see how artificial her life is, how far she's strayed from the pure ideals of her Catholic girlhood, how much more love she needs than she has been getting, and what a revolting piece of Wasp slime her husband is. In the end, the heroine seems, incredibly, to have redeemed herself through self-absorption; the movie doesn't benefit from any such miracle. Although there are more jokes here than in any of Allen's last few features, the picture isn't really a comedy: it's a sermon with gags. The large cast also includes Joe Mantegna, Alec Baldwin, Blythe Danner, Judy Davis, Bob Balaban, and Bernadette Peters (who does a sensational brief turn as a cynical muse).—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/31/90.) (Loews Fine Arts.)

L'Atalante (1934)—This extraordinary film was the only full-length feature directed by Jean Vigo, who died (at the age of twenty-nine) just three weeks after its première in 1934. The movie had been drastically cut by the distributor for that first release; it was partially restored in 1940, and it has now been given another major renovation. Vigo's film now looks and sounds better than ever. The screenplay, rewritten by Vigo and Albert Riéra from an original scenario by Jean Guinée, tells the simple story of a pair of newlyweds named Jean (Jean Dasté) and Juliette (Dita Parlo); he's the captain of a river barge called L'Atalante, and she's a girl from one of the villages on his route. As they travel down the river, they become impatient with each other; they are separated, then find each other again, and life resumes its intended course. Vigo treats the story the way a jazz musician treats a popular song, improvising on the melody by plunging into its carefully sequenced chords and predictable rhythms and taking them apart to see what they're made of. He is the most playful and the least rigid of the great film artists; his images seduce us with the promise of a larger, richer world and unbounded freedom to roam in it—the promise, that is, of endless stimulation, inexhaustible sensations. The best thing about this new version is that, for all the restorers' diligence, the film is still messy, imperfect, defiantly incomplete; it's a collection of inspired fragments, the sketchbook of an artist whose imagination was, and will forever remain, gloriously immature. Michel Simon plays a rambunctious old salt called Père Jules, who is the presiding spirit of the movie. Also with Louis Lefèvre and Gilles Margaritis. The stunning cinematography is by Boris Kaufman; Maurice Jaubert wrote the lovely score. In French.—T.R. (11/5/90) (Lincoln Plaza; through Jan. 3.)

Avalon—In legend, Avalon is an earthly paradise. The writer-director Barry Levinson uses the name as his Rosebud; it's carved into the façade of the castlelike Baltimore apartment house where the five Krichinsky brothers, Jews who immigrated from Eastern Europe before the First World War, make their first American home. In Levinson's view, those early years were a golden age. The film is set mostly during his own childhood, in the late forties, when his parents move to the suburbs, and TV breaks up the clan's social patterns, and the surviving brothers have divided into feuding factions. The scattered fine comic moments don't make up for the wide streak of fuddy-duddyism in the notion that the family used to be the bulwark of the nation's value system. The movie is an elegy to a mythical past, and people emerge from the theatre sniffling. They've been told they're suffering from soul-sickness—the loss of unity, harmony, family music. With Elizabeth Perkins, Aidan Quinn, Kevin Pollak, Armin Mueller-Stahl, and Joan Plowright.—P.K. (10/22/90) (23rd St. West Triplex.)



At the Theatre 80 St. Marks, Joan Bennett and James Mason in "The Reckless Moment"

Caught (1948)—This movie, with its portrait of Howard Hughes, is probably the most American of Max Ophuls' American movies. Ophuls had suffered at Hughes' hands—had wasted time on worthless projects and been referred to as "the oaf." In this movie, a vicious, half-mad millionaire (Robert Ryan) marries a young innocent (Barbara Bel Geddes) in order to spite his analyst. The movie centers on the desperate predicament of the girl when, pregnant, she realizes that she is just a cynical joke to her husband. James Mason plays the doctor who tries to help her. Curt Bois appears as the millionaire's slimy pimp—a worm who finally turns. This well-acted, little-publicized melodrama was a financial failure, but it's emotionally complex and has strong undercurrents. Robert Ryan is very convincingly scary. The script, by Arthur Laurents, was ostensibly based on the novel "Wild Calendar," by Libby Block, which Enterprise Pictures had hired Ophuls to do, but which he had no interest in. Actually, Laurents built the script on stories that Ophuls told him about Hughes, and on the accounts given by one of Hughes' girls. Cinematography by Lee Carmes; music by Frederick Hollander.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Jan. 8.)

Dances with Wolves—Set during the Civil War, this big Indians-versus-Cavalry epic is like a New Age social-studies lesson. Kevin Costner, who directed and is the star, has an untroubled face and laid-back diction. As Lieutenant Dunbar, a Union officer, he sees that the Sioux have a superior culture and he changes sides. This is a nature-boy movie, a kid's daydream of being an Indian. When Dunbar has become a Sioux named Dances with Wolves, he writes in his journal that he knows for the first time who he really is. Costner has feathers in his hair and feathers in his head. He and his friend Michael Blake (who worked up the material with him in mind and then wrote the novel and the screenplay) are trying to show the last years of the Sioux as an independent nation from the Sioux point of view, and it's probably that sympathy for the Indians that the audience responds to. But Costner is a movie-making novice: instead of helping us understand the Sioux, he simply makes the Sioux like genial versions of us. This three-hour Western weeper, with its sluggish action and poorly shaped scenes, was made by a bland megalomaniac. (The Indians should have named him Plays with Camera.) Shot in South Dakota; the wide-screen cinematography, by Dean Semler, is spacious and open at times, and there are fine images of buffalo pounding by. With Mary McDonnell, Maury Chaykin, Robert Pastorelli, Graham Greene as Kicking Bird, and Rodney A. Grant as Wind in His Hair.—P.K. (12/17/90) (Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews Tower East, and Loews Paramount.)

Edward Scissorhands—A Transylvanian castle rises high in the air out of the end of a bare, flat suburban street. One day, Peg Boggs, the Avon lady (Dianne Wiest, magically daffy), makes a call on the macabre, tumbledown place and discovers an adolescent fairy-tale boy, white-faced Edward (Johnny Depp), with two collections of long sharp shears where his hands should be. (He was created in the castle's kitchen workshop by an aged inventor—Vincent Price, in flashbacks—who died before he could attach the hands he had prepared.) Peg invites the boy to come home with her. At first, this movie, directed by Tim Burton, has a lovely

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IN BRIEF—Cont'd

comic spirit, but when the suburbanites think Edward is dangerous and turn against him, the material turns into cheesy, plot-centered melodrama. It has a central flaw: the idea of a boy who cuts when he wants to touch is pre-interpreted—he's the pure creative artist who can't be around people because he can't help hurting them; he's the woeful misunderstood kid. Edward is an emasculated Tim Burton; he's Burton saying, "I've always been a sweet guy." (The picture becomes Christmassy and angelic.) With Winona Ryder, Alan Arkin, Kathy Baker, Conchata Ferrell, and Anthony Michael Hall. The score, by Danny Elfman, has an antic sweep to it, and the production design, by Bo Welch, has a fair share of surprises, but the script, by Caroline Thompson, based on Burton's sketches and the story the two of them devised, is undernourished.—P.K. (12/17/90) (Ziegfeld.)

Fahrenheit 451 (1966)—Ray Bradbury's story about a future society in which books are forbidden was filmed in England by François Truffaut, with Julie Christie and Oskar Werner. The idea has an almost irresistible appeal, but Truffaut doesn't exploit the obvious possibilities. He barely dramatizes the material at all, and though there are charming, childlike moments, the performers seem listless, and the whole enterprise is a little drab. —P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Jan. 3.)

The Front (1976)—The writer, Walter Bernstein, had a nifty comedy idea—to make a movie about the blacklisting in the entertainment industry during the McCarthy era, centering on a political innocent who fronts for blacklisted writers—but he didn't develop its comic potential. Woody Allen gives the film its only spark. He plays Howie, a restaurant cashier and small-time bookie who becomes a front; the funniest, most original scenes show the stirrings of literary vanity within this non-writer. The bulk of the film, though, is set up like a wartime anti-Nazi melodrama; it's the good guys versus the bad guys, and Howie becomes the Everyman who has to learn to choose sides. The pacing of the director, Martin Ritt, is off, the sequences don't flow, and the film seems sterile, unpopulated, and flat. With Zero Mostel in a major role, and Michael Murphy, Herschel Bernardi, Remak Ramsey, and the dark, solemnly woebegone Andrea Marcovicci.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Jan. 6.)

GoodFellas—The director, Martin Scorsese, gives you a lift. He loves the Brooklyn organized-crime milieu, because it's where distortion, hyperbole, and exuberance all commingle. The movie is about being cock of the walk, *with banners flying and crowds cheering.* Based on Nicholas Pileggi's nonfiction book "Wiseguy," it's a triumphant piece of filmmaking—journalism and sociology presented with the brio of drama. But the three major hoods, played by Ray Liotta, Robert De Niro, and Joe Pesci, don't have a strong enough presence, and the movie lacks the juice and richness that come with major performances. (It's like the Howard Hawks "Scarface" without Scarface.) What you respond to is Scorsese's bravura: the filmmaking process becomes the subject of the movie. Watching it is like getting strung out on pure sensation. Paul Sorvino as Paulie and Lorraine Bracco as Karen both come through, and other performers in minor roles give the movie a frenzied, funny texture. The screenplay is by Pileggi and Scorsese; the cinematography is by Michael Ballhaus; the editing is by Thelma Schoonmaker.—P.K. (9/24/90) (Eastside Cinema, Quad Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

Havana—This Robert Redford vehicle, directed by Sydney Pollack, is a long, lavishly produced, and entirely unconvincing attempt to make a "Casablanca"-style romantic thriller set in the final days of Batista's Cuba. Castro's revolution functions here as what the coming attractions of fifty years ago might have called a "turbulent backdrop" to a love story: the garish, corrupt Havana of the fifties is the sort of setting that's supposed to heighten all the basic human passions—to charge everything with danger and excitement. It doesn't. The screenplay (credited to Judith Rascoe and David Rayfiel) gives Redford and his co-star, Lena Olin, page after page of florid pop-existentialist dialogue, and nothing the characters do makes any sense except in old-movie terms: he's transformed from a cynic into a hero; she runs through the rioting, exultant crowds on *the night the city falls to the rebels; they* part, ruefully; alone on a beach, he waits for her. That sort of thing. Pollack's direction is, as always, proficient and tasteful; unfortunately, the picture would be more fun—in a campy way—if it were cruder and sloppier. *Also with Raul Julia, Alan Arkin, and Tomas* Milian.—T.R. (Beekman, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and Regency.)

Kiss Me Kate (1953)—A backstage farce set during the staging of a musical version of "The Taming of the Shrew," with Kathryn Grayson and Howard Keel as the warring stars. Grayson's trilling is something to contend with, and so is her busy, amateurish performance, and there's a lot of badly placed rambunctious comedy from just about everybody. But there's also a marvellous Cole Porter score, with such songs as "Where Is the Life That Late I Led?," "Why Can't You Behave?," "Too Darn Hot," "I've Come to Wive It Wealthily in Padua," and "Always True to You in My Fashion." And there is Howard Keel, with his strong baritone and his good-hearted leering; a dark goatee gives him more chin, and with his great height he looks hilarious in Petruchio's striped pants. And there is the dancing of Bob Fosse, Tommy Rall, and Bobby Van—their "From This Moment On" number, choreographed by Fosse, is one of the high points of movie-musical history; in its speed and showmanship one can see the Fosse style in its earliest film realization. This sequence more than balances out the grossly embarrassing moments, such as the one when Keel tells Grayson, who is about to quit acting and go off with a Texan (Willard Parker), that she belongs in the theatre. Maybe because Grayson looks so uncomfortable—so aware of her shortcomings as an actress—Ann Miller, who obviously enjoys performing, comes off as lively and amusing; she doesn't just do her usual ticktock tapping, because she's working with those three leaping male dancers, and with Carol Haney, too. Directed by George Sidney, with dances staged by Hermes Pan. The Cole Porter Broadway show, with a book by Samuel and Bella Spewack, was adapted to M-G-M's requirements by Dorothy Kingsley —i.e., it was cleaned up and overtamed. (Filmed, and shown here, in double-system 3-D)—P.K. (Film Forum; through Jan. 3.)

The Leopard (1963)—The film had been cut to two hours and forty-one minutes when it opened in this country, in a dubbed-into-English version that didn't always seem in synch, and with the color brightened in highly variable and disorienting ways. The new version, not released here until September, 1983, is in Italian, with subtitles, and at its *full length—three hours and five minutes.* And it's magnificent—a sweeping popular epic, with obvious similarities to "Gone with the Wind," and with an almost Chekhovian sensibility. Based on the novel by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, an impoverished Sicilian prince, it has a hero on a grand scale— Don Fabrizio, Prince of Salina, played superlatively by Burt Lancaster, who has acknowledged that he modelled his performance on the nobleman director, Luchino Visconti. The film is set in the eighteen-sixties, when Italy was in the middle of a revolution, but it's essentially about the Prince himself—the aging Leopard—and how he reacts to the social changes. We couldn't be any closer to Lancaster's Prince if we were inside his skin, which in a way we are. We see what he sees, feel what he feels, and, in the last hour, set at a splendid ball that marks the aristocrats' acceptance of the Mafia-dominated parvenus who are taking over their wealth and power, we're inside his mind as he relives his life, experiences regret, and accepts the dying of his class and his own death. It's one of the greatest of all passages in movies. With Alain Delon as the Prince's sly nephew; Claudia Cardinale as a shrewd, sensual heiress; Paolo Stoppa as her beady-eyed, land-grabbing father; Rina Morelli as the Prince's repressed, whimpering wife; and Romolo Valli, Serge Reggiani, Leslie French, and Pierre Clementi. (Both Paolo Stoppa and Rina Morelli give superb performances; Alain Delon is perhaps too airy for his role.) The score is by Nino Rota; the cinematography is by the justly celebrated Giuseppe Rotunno. —P.K. (Cinema Village; Jan. 6-8.)

Mr. & Mrs. Bridge—An adaptation, by the Merchant Ivory team (the director James Ivory, the producer Ismail Merchant, and the writer Ruth Prawer Jhabvala), of Evan S. Connell's novels about the painfully respectable Bridge family of Kansas City. Walter and India Bridge (Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward) are pure exemplars of the middle; they're middle-aged and middle-class; they live in a medium-sized city in virtually the dead center of the United States; and they *are neither truly happy nor consciously unhappy.* They're monsters of moderation. At the beginning of the film, Ivory seems eerily in tune with the novels' distinctive sensibility: the domestic vignettes are sharply dramatized and succeed each other with an even, *confident rhythm; the nuances of behavior,* language, and décor register and then resonate satisfyingly; the tone is exactly right, cool but not consdescending. The picture gets by, initially, on its strange mood of chilling coziness, and when we tire of that—and we do, because *it doesn't change or develop*—the actors keep us engaged a while longer. Newman doesn't try to soften the character, or to distance himself from it with exaggerated effects, and his scrupulousness pays off. The character seems not more likable but more human than it does in the novels; by very simple means. Newman enables us to understand Mr. Bridge's insensitivity and emotional ineptitude. And Woodward, too, gives a delicate, subtle performance: she embodies a foolish woman vividly and unpatronizingly. But the screenplay retains the static quality of the books' construction, so at a certain point the scenes being to feel arbitrary. And Ivory's perspective on the material seems to become clouded by a storm of minutiae—a surfeit of period detail. (The action takes place in the late thirties and early forties.) In the end, the Bridges aren't large enough either to move us or to terrify us; they're the Ambersons without the magnificence. Also with Blythe Danner, Kyra Sedgwick, Robert Sean Leonard, Margaret Welsh, and Simon Callow.—T.R. (12/3/90) (Cinema II.)

Penny Serenade (1941)—Irene Dunne and Cary Grant, who had made audiences laugh in "The Awful Truth" and "My Favorite Wife," jerked tears this time. They play a childless couple who adopt an infant, learn to love it, and then lose it. The director, George Stevens, dragged his feet (the picture is more than two hours long), and he wasn't very subtle; the film is "sincere" in an inert and horribly pristine way. Yet he made the sentimental story convincing to a wide audience; many people talk about this picture as if it had *really* been deeply moving. It may be that the unrealistic casting does the trick: the appeal to the audience is that two glamorous stars play an ordinary couple and suffer the calamities that do in fact happen to ordinary people. When tragedy strikes Irene Dunne *and Cary Grant, it hurts the audience in a* special way. And Grant could hardly have been better. Using his dark eyes and his sensuous, clouded handsomeness as a romantic mask, he gave his role a defensive, not quite forthright quality, and he brought out everything that it was possible to bring out of his warmed-over lines, weighing them perfectly, so that they almost seemed felt. With Edgar Buchanan, Beulah Bondi, and Ann Doran; the screenplay is by Morrie Ryskind. —P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Jan. 4-5.)

Postcards from the Edge—This tale of a sorrowful, wisecracking starlet (Meryl Streep) whose brassy, boozing former-star mother (Shirley MacLaine) started her on sleeping pills when she was nine is camp without the zest of camp. It's camp played borderline straight—a druggy-Cinderella movie about an unformed girl who has to go past despair to find herself. The director, Mike Nichols, a parodist who feigns sincerity, and his tone keeps slipping around. What's clear is that we're meant to be enthralled by the daughter's radiant face, her refinement, her honesty. Nichols keeps the camera on Streep as if to prove that he can make her a popular big star—a new Crawford or Bette Davis. (She remains distant, emotionally atonal.) The tacky, bright-colored film—a near-plotless version of a woman's picture—is weightless, yet it's watchable. Its jadedness appeals to the narcissism of show-biz insiders and to the would-be insider in the rest of us. (Nichols is acclaimed for being hip to the Zeitgeist.) There are a lot of people to look at: Gene Hackman, Dennis Quaid, Richard Dreyfuss, *Annette Bening,* Robert Bartlett, CCH Pounder, Oliver Platt, Gary Morton, Mary Wickes, Rob Reiner, Simon Callow, Michael Ontkean, Pepe Serna, and Dana Ivey. The

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screenplay, by Carrie Fisher (with Nichols' uncredited collaboration), is based on her novel; cinematography by Michael Ballhaus. —P.K. (10/22/90) (Worldwide Cinemas.)

Reversal of Fortune—An entertainingly trashy sick-joke docudrama about how Claus von Bülow's conviction for trying to kill his superrich wife was overturned on appeal through the brainpower of the Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz and his team of students and former students. Jeremy Irons' von Bülow is a pop conception of a decadent aristocrat, and the crowd-pleasing satirical subtext is that the heirs and heiresses of the great fortunes are useless, bored, unloving, and unloved. The fun here is that Irons' performance is a masterly conceit. His von Bülow is a depraved cuckoo; he simply can't resist playing ghoulish comedian and making Dershowitz (Ron Silver) his stooge. The script, by Nicholas Kazan, is skillfully constructed, but it's based on Dershowitz's book about the case, and he's the protagonist—the crusading lawyer searching for evidence of innocence. Silver's Dershowitz seems to be overdosing on proud sentimental Jewishness. (That this is a positive stereotype makes it no less a stereotype.) The direction, by Barbet Schroeder, is assured but often impersonal and emptily energetic. With Glenn Close (very effective as Sunny von Bülow, the comatose narrator), Christine Baranski as Andrea Reynolds, Julie Hagerty (uncredited) as Alexandra Isles, and Stephen Mailer, Annabella Sciorra, Uta Hagen, and Fisher Stevens. Music by Mark Isham.—P.K. (11/19/90) (Quad Cinema, and West Side Cinema.)

The Russia House—Fred Schepisi's movie, based on the novel by John le Carré, is an immensely satisfying entertainment. It's an espionage thriller in which things are much, much simpler than they appear to be—a notion that all but subverts the premises of the genre. As is usual in such stories, there are important secrets up for grabs; here they're contained in a manuscript written by a top Soviet defense scientist, Yakov (Klaus Maria Brandauer). The scientist has tried to put this document in the hands of a man he considers a kindred spirit—an alcoholic, saxophone-playing English publisher named Barley Blair (Sean Connery)—but it winds up in the possession of the intelligence professionals of the C.I.A. and MI-6, who then involve Barley in a complicated espionage operation. In this story, the fine-tuned paranoia of the Cold War seems almost comic. The screenplay, by Tom Stoppard, is cleverly constructed, and Schepisi—a virtuoso at making complex action lucid—gives the picture an even, flowing rhythm: he knows that the thriller elements are a farcical counterpoint to the real story, in which all the thrills are emotional ones. The movie diagrams the moves of the professional-spy game while keeping our attention focussed on the amateurs: Barley, Yakov, and Katya (Michelle Pfeiffer), the beautiful woman who acts as a messenger for Yakov and falls in love with Barley. This is a great role for Sean Connery; he gives his richest, most affecting performance. And he and Pfeiffer are superbly matched, because they're both direct, unfussy actors. (There's nothing devious or self-conscious in their relation to the camera or to each other.) The Russian scenery is lovingly photographed by Ian Baker, and the supporting cast provides small delights throughout. (James Fox and Ken Russell are particularly good.) This movie's professionalism is bracing because the enthusiasm and the generous spirit of the amateur are still in evidence. Also with Roy Scheider, John Mahoney, J. T. Walsh, and Michael Kitchen.—T.R. (12/31/90) (Angelika Film Center, Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews New York Twin, Guild, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

The Sheltering Sky—Published in 1949, Paul Bowles' semi-autobiographical account of his marriage fascinated readers by its Olympian closeted tone. Under the novel's vaporousness is a pop theme: what happens to a modern, dissatisfied woman—a New York artist-intellectual—if she's in the Sahara, her husband dies, and she's enslaved in a harem? But this is not simply a male writer's version of a woman's harem-whore fantasy: the wife, Kit, seems to be fulfilling the nature and desires that the husband, Port, cannot fulfill for himself. Bernardo Bertolucci's attenuated film version filters out the pop element that gives the book its bit of kicky horror. The

Burt Lancaster in "The Leopard"

movie is about Kit (Debra Winger) giving over to another way of seeing; it's about the shift in her psyche as she becomes a contented love slave and moves away from the verbal, from definitions and categories and neuroses. Bertolucci appears to have lost interest in pace and excitement and verve; he goes deep into monotony. (The whole thing has the impressively decadent look of an Armani ad.) With John Malkovich as Port (who's full of smug self-hatred), Campbell Scott as Tunner, Jill Bennett, Timothy Spall, and Bowles (at seventy-nine) as some sort of presiding expatriate sage. The script is by Mark Peploe and Bertolucci; the cinematography is by Vittorio Storaro; the music is by Ryuichi Sakamoto.—P.K. (12/17/90) (Murray Hill Cinemas, and 57th St. Playhouse.)

Together Again (1944)—The title refers to the earlier pairing of Irene Dunne and Charles Boyer in "Love Affair" and "When Tomorrow Comes." This time, she's a widow, a small-town mayor who doesn't know that she needs love, and he's a sculptor from the big city, commissioned to do a commemorative statue of her late husband. During their various misunderstandings, each becomes engaged to a high-school student, and a million laughs ensue, all of them from the people in the picture. With Charles Coburn, Mona Freeman, and Elizabeth Patterson. Directed by Charles Vidor; among the many writers employed were Virginia Van Upp and Herbert Biberman.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Jan. 4-5.)

To Sleep with Anger—A domestic comedy with an unusually dense texture. It's shot straightforwardly, in a style that appears realistic almost to the point of banality, and yet right from the start there's something unsettling about its plainness: Charles Burnett, who wrote and directed, keeps hinting that things are not necessarily what they seem. Gideon (Paul Butler) and Suzie (Mary Alice) are a middle-aged black couple who live in Los Angeles; their roots, however, are in the rural South, and they've retained quite a few of the customs, values, and superstitions of the culture they were brought up in. The story gets going when a friend of theirs from back home appears on their doorstep; they invite him to stay with them awhile, and he does. This unexpected guest, Harry (Danny Glover), turns out to be a gifted confidence man, with a sharp eye for human weakness; he's a grinning, honey-tongued demon. He uses his backcountry wisdom with sinister, obscure intent, for purposes that Burnett, cunningly, allows to remain ambiguous. The presence of Harry gives the realistic surface of the movie a vibrant strangeness; he seems to transform everything that happens in these clean, comfortable living rooms and kitchens into dark rituals performed in the woods in the dead of night. The picture has a risky, complex tone: it's a comedy, because the family's threatened world is set right in the end, but there are moments along the way when the intimations of unseen controlling forces—both in Glover's elegantly suggestive performance and in the eerie, calm precision of Burnett's direction—give us the creeps. Also with Richard Brooks, Carl Lumbly, Ethel Ayler, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Vonetta McGee, Davis Roberts, Sy Richardson, and Devaughn Walter Nixon. There's a brief appearance by the blues singer Jimmy Witherspoon, who performs a mournful, robust version of "See See Rider."—T.R. (11/5/90) (Angelika Film Center.)

Vincent & Theo—The director, Robert Altman, and the screenwriter, Julian Mitchell, give us an interpretation of the bond that helps to keep Vincent alive while it tears Theo apart. Vincent is obsessive about his painting; Theo is obsessive about Vincent and about his own inability to sell Vincent's work and help him —he can give him only a pittance. This double Passion-play movie is very different from the other Altman movies (even allowing for how different they are from each other). The theme—the bitter entanglement of art and commerce—is Altman's lifelong theme, and, staying with it strictly in terms of the van Gogh brothers, he's able to release his own feelings about how an artist's frustrations lead him to acts of self-destructive fury —cutting off his ear to spite his face. It's a movie about two sensualists made by a sensualist, who understands that their bond of love of art is also a bond of shared rage at the world of commerce. This daring film works on its own relentless, celebratory terms. With Tim Roth, whose acting is a form of kinetic discharge, as Vincent and Paul Rhys as Theo. The cinematography is by Jean Lepine, the production design is by Stephen Altman, the score is by Gabriel Yared; all three rise to the occasion.—P.K. (11/19/90) (Angelika Film Center.)

The White Cliffs of Dover (1944)—Sentimental patriotism, in the "Mrs. Miniver" mold, and a truly monstrous cultural artifact. Irene Dunne (looking rather mature) plays a young, small-town girl from Tulsa who is courted by Sir John (Alan Marshal), an English aristocrat; they are married on the eve of the First World War, amid much speechifying about the ties that bind the English (represented by Gladys Cooper as Sir John's indomitable, upper-crust mother and Dame May Whitty as his devoted old nanny) and the Americans (represented by the bride's wise, jolly father, Frank Morgan). Sir John goes directly from his honeymoon to the war; Irene and the English women sit around waiting for the soldiers to come home, and when Gladys Cooper receives word that her other son—Reggie—has been killed in action, she crosses her drawing room, walking straighter than ever. Irene's husband has a few days leave in Paris, so she takes her baby boy and the silliest hat you've ever seen (it has a floral doodad that sticks up a full six inches) and meets him there, and the three of them watch proudly as the Americans, who have entered the war, march into the city. (That's the movie's emotional peak.) Irene resumes her waiting; Sir John is killed in action, and she goes into a decline, with hysterical seizures. But she regains her self-control, and the baby grows into serious-faced little Roddy McDowall, who becomes attached to beautiful little Elizabeth Taylor, whose family lives on the land he will inherit. The picture becomes really grotesque when two horrid blond German boys show up; they're junior-Nazi types and they seem privy to Hitler's war plans. Watching their ugly behavior, old Frank Morgan, who has been visiting, *knows* the truth; he tells Irene there's another war coming. Desperate to save Roddy from his father's fate, she packs him up and they head for Tulsa. He's a virtuous tyke, though, and on the train he convinces her that they mustn't run away—they must go back and do what's right. Years pass; he turns into Peter Lawford, Elizabeth Taylor turns into June Lockhart, he goes off to the Second World War, and old Irene, now a Red Cross nurse, finds him among the wounded brought in to her hospital. Probably the movie only appears to go on for several more generations. With Van Johnson, C. Aubrey Smith, John Warburton, Jill Esmond, Brenda Forbes, Norma Varden, and is that Tom Drake as a dead American soldier? Based on a narrative poem by Alice Duer Miller; the screenplay is by Claudine West, George Froeschel, and Jan Lustig. Directed by Clarence Brown (he sinks to the level of the material—this must be his worst-paced movie); produced by Sidney Franklin.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Jan. 8-9.)

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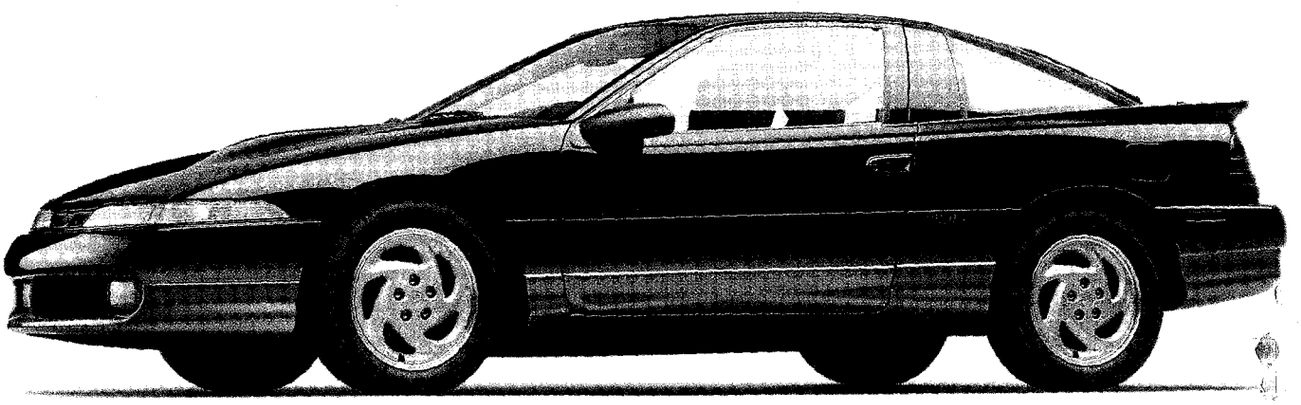
MAN: This Eagle Talon TSi and Toyota Celica All-Trac both have all-wheel drive. But the Celica costs about 4,000 dollars more.

OFF-CAMERA VOICE: What do those guys at Toyota take us for?

MAN: About 4,000 dollars.

(MUSIC)



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Eagle Talon TSi with all-wheel drive and 195 horsepower turbocharged, intercooled engine is backed by Chrysler's exclusive 7/70 Protection Plan. This plan protects the engine and powertrain for 7 years or 70,000 miles and against outerbody rust-through for 7 years or 100,000 miles. See limited warranty at dealer. Restrictions apply. Price claim based on comparison of sticker prices. For more information about Eagle Talon, or how to buy or lease one, call 1-800-JEEP-EAGLE. Buckle up for safety.

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

IN the Soviet Union, in Eastern Europe, and in the world at large, the events of the last few years have far outshone any expectations that used to be stirred by the idea of an end to the Cold War. Very few people, if they had been asked to imagine such a thing before it happened, would have constructed a tale in which Communism collapsed so swiftly, and democracy and respect for international law were to such a startling extent the beneficiaries. As the shock of these developments begins to wear off, however, Americans are faced with a far less happy aspect of the Cold War's passing: the fact that it has not yet proved to be an occasion for the United States to turn its energies inward—to address such long-neglected problems as the deterioration of public education, the inequities of our system of health care, homelessness, and the rise of what has been called an urban underclass. Indeed, it is hard to remember a period in our political life which has been characterized by such a scarcity of actions, proposals, or even constructive talk concerning the deep questions facing us as a nation. Domestic policy has virtually ceased to exist. It has become the great void in American government—a hole as frightening, in its way, as the one in the ozone layer.

In early October, when the effort to reach a budget-deficit agreement with Congress was making large demands on his time, George Bush acknowledged that the task of mobilizing the world's opposition to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait—and foreign policy in general—gave him more satisfaction than any challenges on the domestic front. Historians will certainly be struck by the degree to which military confrontations with foreign governments have dominated the first two years of this first Presidency of the post-Cold War era. They may even speculate about a causal relationship between Bush's distaste for domestic policy and the events that have lately saved him from having to spend much time on it. George Bush did not, of course, invent the Gulf crisis. Since it developed, however, his Administration has done everything possible to keep it at fever pitch, and has reacted with dismay and indignation to suggestions that it might be resolved by some means less drastic than war or the threat of war.

The President and his supporters have described the Gulf crisis as a pivotal opportunity for the post-Cold War world to prove that it can resist and deter aggression. Yet in large ways this crisis resembles those of the era we have supposedly put behind us. Despite all the resolutions of international support, Washington is once again the headquarters of a global undertaking in

which Americans stand to bear most of the burden in money and, if it comes to it, in lives. Once again, it seems, the issue of affordability—the reef on which domestic policy has been grounded for years—poses no obstacle when the danger is external rather than internal.

Apart from the budget-deficit agreement and the savings-and-loan bailout—two emergency measures that had strong bipartisan backing—the only significant piece of domestic legislation passed by Congress with George Bush's active support has been a long-discussed sequel to the Clean Air Act of 1970. Otherwise, the domestic policy of this Administration has consisted mainly of peripheral proposals intended to score political points (an anti-flag-burning law, a good-taste clause for federally supported art), and vetoes of various Democratic initiatives (among them a parental-leave bill, a civil-rights bill, and a series of attempts to provide funds for birth control or abortion counselling). These positions have helped maintain Bush's standing with important Republican constituencies, but they are little more than a blur in most Americans' perception of what the President has been doing for the last two years. Insofar as Americans perceive George Bush as a decisive and dynamic leader, Iraq and Panama are the biggest reasons. Remove those two episodes from the story of his Presidency, and there is very little story left.

In recent weeks, a number of people in and around the Administration have been hinting that the President will use his State of the Union Message to answer those who have faulted him for not presenting a coherent and (a word much used in these discussions) visionary domestic program. As for the content of such a program, there has been

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speculation that Bush will dip into the ideas of a school of political thought known as the New Paradigm.

Largely the creation of a junior White House aide, James Pinkerton—he was the discoverer, in 1988, of the Willie Horton issue—the New Paradigm is a call for efforts to help the poor and the middle class which avoid the familiar liberal pattern (the Old Paradigm) of raising taxes, spawning bureaucracies, and encouraging dependency. Its key concepts, according to Pinkerton, are empowerment, decentralization, free-market forces, individual choice, and pragmatism. Pinkerton calls his paradigm "nonbureaucratic idealism," and in his speeches and interviews he has associated it with the "energy" that dismantled the Berlin Wall and freed Nelson Mandela.

The actual policy that he has been promoting is a very modest one, however—a baby in danger of being overwhelmed by the bunting. Its main elements to date are enterprise zones, education vouchers, a cut in the capital-gains tax, and a home-ownership scheme for tenants in federal housing. The Bush Administration has already endorsed the first three ideas (while indicating a reluctance to get into another capital-gains battle at present) and has made a symbolic commitment to the last. Although the New Paradigm program relies on a confidence in supply-side economics which many people would say was not borne out by the results of the Reagan Administration's tax-cutting experiment, it hardly represents either a sharp break with the expressed views of the Bush Administration or (except for the capital-gains proposal) a significant potential drain on the Treasury.

So it is hard to see why the director of the Office of Management and Budget, Richard Darman, should have felt moved recently to give a long speech singling out the New Paradigm for ridicule. It turns out, though, that what Darman was questioning was not so much the proposals under discussion as the notion of grouping them together and implying that they constituted an attempt to deal with the country's problems. He was challenging the very idea that the President should have, and proclaim, a domestic policy. The tone of his speech was jocular, but his concern was serious. Darman appeared to be saying that domestic policy was not only—as President Bush has indicated—difficult and frustrating but positively dangerous.

Where does the danger lie? Perhaps it can be glimpsed in the polls. In a recent *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll, fifty-one per cent of those surveyed said that the country was headed in the wrong direction, yet fifty-seven per cent approved of George Bush's performance as President. This odd combination of findings may be due in part to the fact—about which Bush, like Reagan, has often complained—that the Democrats control both houses of Congress. But it probably also reflects a growing belief that nothing the government can do—Old Paradigm or New Paradigm—will make any difference, and thus a growing preference for leaders who ignore or belittle the country's problems instead of trying to confront them. (Such an attitude would help explain why Americans have chosen, with growing regularity, to divide their Presidential and congressional votes, leaving neither political party in a position to work its will.) The question that Darman and, we suspect, others in the Administration are asking is this: As long as the public doesn't draw a connection between the President's performance and the nation's condition, why should the President?

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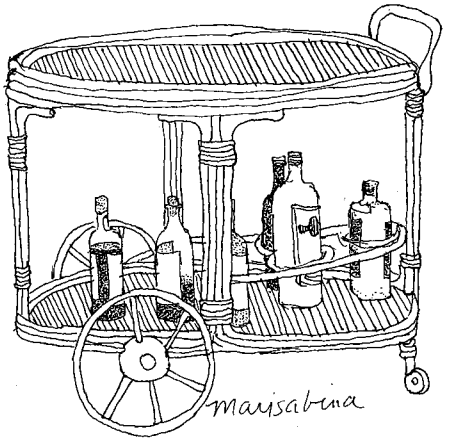
Induction

A FRIEND in Pittsburgh writes:

A historic, if esoteric, event here went unremarked by the local papers. I am speaking of the ninth annual Western Pennsylvania Jewish Sports Hall of Fame awards. Some six hundred people showed up at Congregation Beth Shalom synagogue for the affair, which every year raises thousands of dollars for athletic scholarships and other sports causes.



The speakers included Mayor Sophie Masloff—a bona-fide Jewish grandmother, if not Jewish athlete—who gave a spirited, raspy rendition of the old Fifth Avenue High School cheer:

> Izzy, Ikey, Jake, and Sam—
> They're the boys that don't eat ham!
> Go team!

The crowd, as they say, roared. It had assembled to honor five living inductees and three deceased ones. Previous Hall of Famers have names like Ziggy Kahn, Buckets Sandomire, Buck Gefsky, Farmer Fineberg, Kingfish Elling, and—my favorite—Shmuli Levine. This year's live winners were football hero Izzy Weinstock, round ball coach Jule Rivlin, sports physician Dr. Joe Finegold, baseball's Lew Krause, and a basketball star of the nineteen-twenties and thirties named Wyoming B. Paris, also known as the Masked Marvel, who, at eightysomething, flew in from Kansas for the event.

In his acceptance speech Wyoming first warned his audience that in sports heroics, if not all human endeavor, the older we get, the better we were. Then, having agreed to a three-minute limit on his remarks, he talked for twenty minutes, during which we learned that his parents emigrated from the Ukraine at the turn of the century, first to Pittsburgh and later to a sheep farm in Wyoming. When a son was born in their cavelike dugout in the side of a hill, they decided to honor the New World by naming him after the state. Wyoming historians confirm that Wyoming Benjamin Paris was the first Jewish boy born in that state.

Some might have shrunk from such a name, and changed it—or, at least, suppressed it. Not Wy. He loved and later maximized the attention it attracted. Back in Pittsburgh in 1919, Wy and his brother Bones and four other Jewish kids formed their own basketball club and named it after Enoch Rauh, a popular (and, in his day, the only Jewish) Pittsburgh city councilman. Wy also played for Fifth Avenue High School—alma mater in those days of most Jewish Pittsburgh athletes (and of the pianist-wit Oscar Levant, Wy's friend, whose brother Honey Levant was the family dentist, and whose neighbor Mrs. Finkelstein was— Well, it was a close-knit community).

The Rauh team became Pennsylvania's most outstanding young

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basketballers in that pre-N.B.A. era of semi-pro teams underwritten by families or businesses that shared the players' ethnicity. The Rauhs' toughest rivals were the Duquesne Lafayettes, a Polish steelworkers' team. One night, when a Lafayette player hurled one too many ethnic slurs at Wy, he sucker-punched the offender, not once but twice. A riot erupted in the stands, and the police had to referee. It was the start of his reputation as a "rough" player, but Wy prefers to call it "the beginning of my long-lasting anti-Semitism crusade on the basketball floor." In 1927, Wy's nose was broken during a game, and for some months thereafter he had to wear a fearsome-looking protective face mask fashioned out of aluminum. Pittsburgh sportswriters began referring to him as the Masked Marvel. The name stuck, and, to please his fans, the Marvel went on wearing the mask for considerably longer than he really had to.

Paris married Claire Gill on Thanksgiving Day of 1930; they celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary during the week of his Hall of Fame induction. A tolerance for his bizarre sense of humor is not least among her virtues. One of his running jokes over the years was to write on her copy of the insurance policy he took out on plane trips, "Better luck next time."

After a wartime hitch in the Marines, Paris went back to basketball as a coach, rounding up a team of ex-college stars to play in Altoona. His Altoona Flyers were part of the new All-American Basketball League, which had teams in Columbus, Wheeling, Youngstown, Cumberland, and Zanesville. For special events, he imported such stellar attractions as the original New York Celtics and the all-black New York Renaissance. For his own team he hired the legendary Jimmy Atkins—the first black pro on a white team in Pennsylvania. Typical of many run-ins was a brawl in Uniontown when a diner refused to serve Atkins a postgame burger. Coach Paris spent the night in jail.

Old-timers in Altoona remember a favorite Paris stunt. He seldom showed much emotion, but after an especially bad call he sometimes walked slowly onto the court and politely handed his glasses to the referee.

Wyoming Paris retired from basketball in 1952, and turned to sales training and management in the cemetery and mausoleum businesses, for which he is still a consultant. He moved to Wichita, Kansas, and in 1972 he was its unsuccessful Democratic candidate for Congress. During that campaign, he proposed nationalization of the oil companies, among other things guaranteed to nettle the conservative constituency. He is also an autodidactic expert on Victor Hugo, and quotes his works at the slightest provocation.

"To keep physically and mentally alert," he told his Hall of Fame audience, "I swim, exercise a little daily, and raise a quarter-acre garden and produce the most luscious tomatoes and sweetest corn grown in Kansas. I read voraciously. I never smoked. I take a nip of Canadian Club now and then, and I'm still living an active life at my young age, eighty-three."

"And, furthermore, if you think for one damn minute I'm going to put up with your lousy shenanigans . . ."

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Pita

THE production manager and co-owner of Mediterranean Pita, Inc., a small baking company on 21st Avenue, in Queens, has two different business cards. One of them identifies him as Sotirios Hatziioakimidis. This is the name his parents gave him when he was born, in Athens, in 1934. The other identifies him as Steve X. This is a name he made up. It is a name that the company's secretary, Despina Sinopidis, calls a "shortcut"—a name that is intended to make things easier for people who don't speak Greek. (Despina's shortcut is Debbie.)

The pita that Steve's company makes is the best bread in the whole world, generally speaking. It is round, flat, and chewy, and its surface is bumpy and flecked with brown. Unlike the Middle Eastern-style pita with which most people are familiar, it has no inner pocket (unless you force the issue). You don't cut open Mediterranean pita and put stuff inside it; you put stuff on top of it and fold it over or roll it up. You can also use it as a ready-made crust for pizza, as a substitute for tortillas in burritos, or as a replacement for pancakes. Although its immediate roots are Greek, it is very similar to naan, a traditional Indian flat bread. In fact, several Indian grocers, in New York and elsewhere, treat it as a sort of naturalized Indian staple. Mediterranean's other regular customers include many of the city's gyro and souvlaki venders, several local supermarket chains (Waldbaum's, Key Food, and Pathmark among them), a handful of smaller stores in New York, and some in New Jersey, Colorado, Illinois, North Carolina,

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Florida, and Ontario, to name a few.

Steve is a member of that large subset of men who are seemingly related to Danny DeVito. He is small and somewhat rounded. When he talks about pita, he smiles enthusiastically and waves his hands, which have flour on them. He began making bread and pastry in Greece, where, like his father, he worked as a baker. He came to this country in 1970 and opened a small souvlaki store near Times Square the following year. Unable to buy the kind of bread he wanted, he decided to make his own. He found a man in Queens who was willing to rent him a bakery for three or four hours every night. "I start slow, slow," Steve says. "One night, I make one hundred pita bread. The other night, one hundred fifty pita bread. The only problem is, I sell every day about seven hundred or eight hundred souvlaki."

Steve had customers lined up on the sidewalk outside his store. He also had souvlaki venders begging him to make pita for them, too. To meet the demand, he bought the bakery he had been renting, and hired a few employees. He increased his output to five hundred pitas a day, then six hundred, then a thousand. Word spread. "Now many people is coming from around the state of New York, and they say, 'How you buy this pita bread?' And I say, 'Is no buy this pita bread.' " Soon he was shipping two cases a day to a souvlaki store in Chicago.

Steve eventually realized that he needed a partner. He found one in George Liolis, a native of northern Greece who had come to the United States in 1955, worked as a busboy and a waiter at the Biltmore Hotel, and made some money in the pizza business. He bought a half interest in Steve's company and became its president. Two of his first executive decisions were to change the company's name, which up to that time had been Politiki Pita, and to move to larger quarters. The company is now situated in a modest storefront building in a residential area not far from the Triborough Bridge.

George is more elongated and less flour-oriented than Steve. He is sixty-three years old. Unlike his partner, he wears a coat and tie at work and spends most of his time in a small, predominantly brown office. On the wall beside his desk is a faded map of the United States in which someone has stuck red and blue thumbtacks representing cities where Mediterranean has accounts. Visible (and audible) through a window in the opposite wall is the company's small machine shop. Beyond that is the production area, where dough is mixed by one machine, rolled into small balls by a second machine, flattened into small disks by a third machine, and stretched into larger disks by women wearing hairnets. These larger disks ride a conveyor belt into an oven. When they emerge at the other end, they are bloated and steamy, like hot, underinflated volleyballs. Gradually, they flatten and cool. The current rate of production is four hundred and fifty thousand pitas a week—still not enough.

When Steve thinks about the lively North American market for Greek-style pita bread, a market that didn't exist when he came to New York twenty years ago, he feels proud. Not long ago, he explained, "At first, I don't have equipments, I don't have storage, let me see, you look from the store. And after, slow, slow, I say, don't worry about. I am experienced. I believe in something to make." After saying that, he continued for a while in Greek. Debbie, the secretary, nodded as she listened, commenting, "That's a nice way of putting it."

"I'd love to be a part of the big show in the Gulf, but they tell me they need lawyers right here at home."

Time Travel

WHAT with one thing and another, we were pretty busy in the eighties—too busy to stop and think about where we had been and how we had got where we were. But this is the nineties now, and things have changed. Now, according to a recent cover story in *Time*, we're not getting enough sleep, we're always tired, we're nowhere near as sharp as we used to be. We thought this would be a good time to sit back and take a look at the seventies, because, frankly, we don't have the energy for anything else.

Here is a snapshot of us taken in the mid-seventies with a Polaroid Swinger. We're standing on the edge of a party, hiding deep inside a black turtleneck and not talking to anybody. Everyone else is having fun. We are feeling alienated, and we have the long hair to prove it. Behind those tinted aviator glasses, our eyes seem to have that faraway look—the look we used to get each time we realized anew that probably no one would ever understand us. We are dressed not to kill but to break our parents' hearts. Our body language, in a translation that preserves the poetry of the original, says "Don't even think about parking here."

Now you know why we decided to accept an invitation to attend a big party given the other night by the '70s Preservation Society. It was perhaps the only chance we would ever have to relive the seventies; maybe we could get it right this time. Our journey back

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through the years took us to Chelsea, to a building that used to be a Con Ed power station and is now a club. You may call this club Groove Thing! if you like. That is its name. Inside, the atmosphere was authentic seventies—lots of people milling around in semi-darkness waiting for something to happen. What everyone was waiting for was the presentation by the '70s Preservation Society of the first annual Lava Lamp Achievement Awards, to be given to some people who had helped to define the decade for the rest of us. We made our way, not slouching, not sulking, through the crowds to a balcony overlooking a dance floor and a stage, and were staring at a mirror ball across the room and considering the pros and cons of making meaningful contact with another human being when another human being made contact with us.

"Excuse me, this is my spot," a woman said, and then she squeezed in front of us and planted herself against the railing, impeding our view of the millers below. Of course, it was dealing with this kind of thing all through the eighties that has made us so very tired today, but the woman explained that she was the mother of one of the founders of the '70s Preservation Society and wanted to be able to see everything, so all was forgiven. She told us that her name was Roberta Balsam, and that her son, Craig, and a friend of his, Cliff Chenfeld, were the brains behind the society. Craig, who is from New Jersey, is twenty-nine, and Cliff, who is from Ohio, is thirty, and the two met when they were students at the N.Y.U. School of Law. They both worked as corporate attorneys until it dawned on them that they weren't getting any younger, and last spring they launched the society, so that they could, you know, hold on to the magic. Thanks to their efforts in the sphere of merchandising, you can now send away to headquarters for two collections of songs from the period, including "Billy, Don't Be a Hero" and "Kung Fu Fighting"; a mood ring; and an official T-shirt, which shows the shark from "Jaws" nosing up through the water to attack a yellow happy-face button bobbing on the surface. Mrs. Balsam confessed that the seventies were her favorite decade, too. "I love that time, because that's when I was bringing my children up, driving them around in the car, listening to the music," she said. "Sammy Davis, Jr., had 'The Candy Man' in the seventies. There were a lot of important songs, but you forget."

Before Craig and Cliff took the stage to present the awards, Mrs. Balsam tipped us off on how to tell them apart: "Craig is wearing a denim tuxedo from the seventies, and Cliff is wearing a hat and crazy pants." Cliff's pants, to do them justice, had stripes and zigzags in a wide range of colors, and they probably looked every bit as good that night as they did the first day they were worn. The crowd, now sweaty and all worked up from dancing to some disco music supplied by Tavares, the group that had a few hits from "Saturday Night Fever," was treated to a couple of minutes of Craig and Cliff's philosophy ("We sensed a need and a desire and a wanting to bring the seventies back to America"), and then the ceremonies began.

Now, we don't want to put too much emphasis on the awards themselves. That would be unhealthy. If you were "The Poseidon Adventure" and you had just won a Lava Lamp Achievement Award for being the best disaster movie of the seventies, wouldn't you feel pretty bad for "Earthquake" and "Airport" and "The Towering Inferno"? You would, and everybody's day would be ruined, even though you'd make a lot of noise about how you wished you could share the award with all the other nominees. We do want to mention, however, that two of the actors from "Welcome Back, Kotter" were present to accept awards, and so was the actor who played the smart-alecky red-haired kid on "The Partridge Family," and that right after Barry Manilow was given an L.L.A.A. (in absentia) for being the singer who made people weep the most in the seventies a streaker in a blue baseball cap ran across the stage behind Craig and Cliff.

Our night at Groove Thing! took a lot out of us, so we may skip the next seventies party we're invited to. Don't take it the wrong way, though. It's just that we don't want to push ourself too hard now, because the eighties may be coming back soon, and we know we're going to need all our strength.

ALTERNATIVE DICKENS

PIP IS FOUND IN POSSESSION OF A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

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NEW COUNTRY

HORST LUDERITZ said, "What a country."

Over the breakfast table his wife, Bessie, shook her head at him.

"Boy! The milk!" Horst shouted without looking up from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. "Boy!"

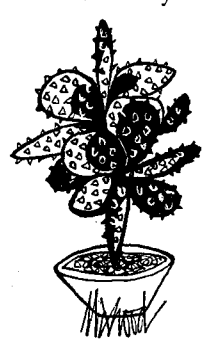
Witbooi, the man of all work, walked onto the tin-roofed veranda, holding a jug of milk. He was mostly Bushman. He had the high, pronounced cheekbones of a Bushman, and for twenty-five years he had worked for Horst and Bessie with a serene, impassive expression. A new white T-shirt showed above the collar of his frayed blue coverall. Horst knew that Bessie had bought the T-shirt for Witbooi. The saying on it was laughable.

"Horst," Bessie said, "he's brought your milk. *Danke schön*, Witbooi, *danke schön*."

"We'll show them now," Horst said to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. "We'll show them a real country."

"So, they are talking of the new Namibia in the *Allgemeine*, is it? It has taken so long," Bessie said. "Witbooi, Witbooi, they're talking of your country even in Germany."

Horst and Bessie had been born in South-West Africa; they both spoke English with strong German accents. Their parents had come with the first German settlers. Bessie's father had been a prosperous rancher in the South. Horst's father had run a bakery in Windhoek. He had never got over the shame of Germany's losing South-West in the Great War, and Horst was glad he hadn't lived to see 1945.



"We'll show them what a country is."

"It's truly a lovely place, this new South-West," Bessie said. "But small, not so important. What have we to show?"

"Talking of a new country, talk of the new Germany." Horst got up from the table and dropped his napkin on his plate.

Every morning, Witbooi drove Horst to his photo shop near the Dr. Verwoerd Park and took the car for errands or to carry Bessie here and there. With the children gone, there was nothing to keep her at home, and she had friends all over the town. The car was an old Opel Rekord Horst ordered specially from Germany. He wanted nothing to do with cars from South Africa, assembled by idiot Boers, even if the parts were German. Typical of the Boers to crumple at the first sign of a fight, to give South-West away without a whimper after they stole it from Germany. The Boers were the silliest crowd he had ever seen. One minute they were running around the country shooting every black that moved and herding the rest into locations. The next they were drinking tea at the Independence celebrations. No discipline. Not that the *Schwarze* would be better.

"What's that you're wearing, boy, under your coverall?" Horst said in the car.

"I am wearing a shirt, my *baas*," Witbooi answered. He had a way of responding with not a scintilla more information than necessary.

"I can see it's a shirt, boy," Horst said. "What does it say?"

"You know, my *baas*, that I cannot read, but I think it is a shirt for the independence of my country."

"Fifteen rand and you don't know what it is?"

"The flag, *baas*. It is a flag of my new country."

"New country," Horst said. "I'll tell you something of a new country."

They had to pull off the road for a motorcade rushing toward the airport—dignitaries falling over each other to leave now that it all finally was done. The South African bureaucrats were plundering the treasury one last time on their way out. One cheeky fellow drove straight to Pretoria in his government Mercedes, big as you please. But the transition year had been good for business—official photographs and passport shots, a few weddings and engagements of local girls to UNTAG troops. Independence Week was a bonanza of parties and meetings. Horst was almost relieved it was over; he was tired. "*Ach*," he said aloud, caressing his mustache. "Where do the years go?"

Witbooi pulled up in front of the photo shop, across from the Dr. Verwoerd Park. "Here is ten rand," Horst said. "Go in the bookshop and see if they have a new *Allgemeine*. Tell the girl not for the twenty-third. I've got that one. Have her give you a new one."

Horst's shop assistant, Miss van Rooyen, was waiting for him to unlock the door. "*Môre*, Miss van Rooyen," he said. He thought he got more out of the coloreds when he spoke Afrikaans.

"Good morning, sir," Miss van Rooyen said.

Witbooi was already back. "No papers, *baas*," he said. "It hasn't come yet."

"Well, go along home then and see if the missus has anything for you."

People moved past the shop just as they always had. Yet it was peaceful in Windhoek for the first time Horst could remember. No South African conscripts—boys, really—standing nervously on the street corners with guns slung over their shoulders, no Casspirs rumbling down Kaiser Street. It was a diamond-clear morning. The lawn in the Dr. Verwoerd Park had drunk every drop of the last summer rains. A black woman sat there on a bench, knitting.

Horst jerked his head toward her and said, "We didn't used to get that. Now, with SWAPO in State House, it's hard to tell, Miss van Rooyen. And what, may I ask, do you think of the reunification of Germany?"

Miss van Rooyen studied her fingernails. "No," she said. "It's very different now."

Miss van Rooyen had no interest beyond her own front stoep. "Communists is what they are, Miss van Rooyen. A bunch of bloody Communists, like that lot in East Germany. Liars and thieves."

"Yes, sir, that's what my father says. But I thought the President looked very handsome on the telly. Do you think he's a terrorist?"

"We've run the Communists out of Germany. Watch. They won't last long here. Just you watch."

"Oh, sir, another war?"

"Hopeless," Horst said under his breath. He rearranged some film packages in a case and wondered what it would be like to live in Germany. Real winter with eiderdowns. Chocolates and more different kinds of bread than you could imagine. The same government, the same language, the same people year after year. Horst had never

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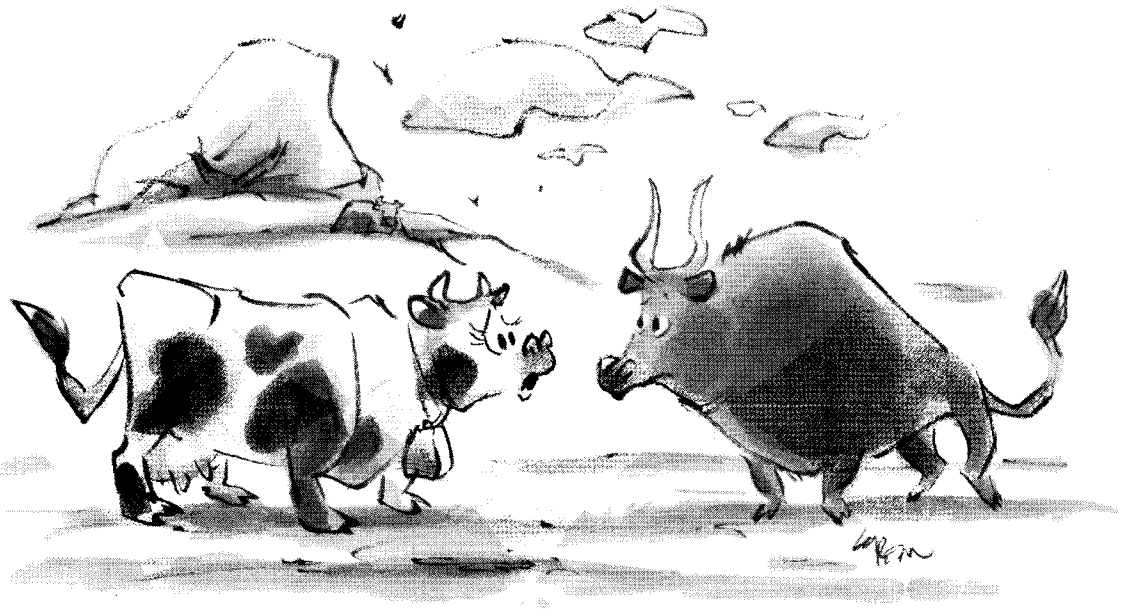

"I love you, too, but with my high cholesterol and your high triglycerides we could never have children."

• •

been to Germany. You didn't make enough money in a photo shop on Kaiser Street to go running off to Europe. His son, Gunther, went once for two weeks after he finished the *Gymnasium*. "It's shit," Gunther said when he came home, and took a job as a computer repairman in Johannesburg. He lived on the East Rand with his wife and children; on his holidays he went hunting in the Okavango and dreamed of buying a Ford safari van with his mates.

There was no curfew in Windhoek. Blacks were around day and night. Once, in the old days, Witbooi was detained by the South African police and beaten. They had found him lying drunk in the shrubbery of a big house. Horst spent a whole day begging them in Afrikaans to let Witbooi go: "Yes, Meneer; no, Meneer." They said Witbooi was a dissident. Now people wore SWAPO shirts and hung pictures of Sam Nujoma in their parlors. Horst would have to get one for the shop.

Miss van Rooyen was chatting with an UNTAG soldier as black as a Leica camera, not that anyone remembered what a Leica was. "I'm from Ghana, Miss," the soldier was saying. "Accra. Do you know it?" Miss van Rooyen blushed. "Can you take us a photo, sir? Of me and the young lady? I want to send a photo to my mother so she can see how healthy I've become here." He grinned at Miss van Rooyen. "And all the beautiful young girls we have liberated."

Miss van Rooyen wriggled under the Ghanaian's gaze, but Horst could tell she wanted to be photographed. If her father, old Jappie van Rooyen, should ever find out, there would be hell to pay. Right enough, too. Sweet, simple Miss van Rooyen with an African. And these blokes from the West looked to be real natives, with their broad noses and thick lips.

Horst raised the going price ten rand and winked at Miss van Rooyen. "A portrait's thirty rand. Have you got thirty rand, troopie?"

The Ghanaian reached his long, muscular arm into his khaki trousers and produced a fifty-rand note. Then he went to the door, holding his hand up. "I'm coming back," he said. He returned with three purple daisies from the Dr. Verwoerd Park and put them lovingly into Miss van Rooyen's frizzy, rust-colored hair. "Now we are ready," he said. He dragged a chair behind the screen for Horst's cameras and stood stiffly beside it with one arm over the back. "Come," he said to Miss van Rooyen.

Miss van Rooyen advanced slowly and sat down, her hair brushing gently against the Ghanaian's arm. She didn't move her head away.

Horst positioned the camera. "Ready," he said.

The Ghanaian tapped Miss van Rooyen on the shoulder. "Say 'Africa.' " They both beamed, and Horst snapped what he knew was a very good shot. Pity he couldn't put it in the shopwindow for display.

Witbooi came in with the *Allgemeine*. It was the same edition Horst had been reading at breakfast. "Boy," he said, "I told you not the twenty-third."

"The missus sent it," Witbooi said. "She bought it."

Miss van Rooyen and the Ghanaian were chatting again. Horst glanced at the paper and pointed to a photograph. "Witbooi," he said, "you see this? This is my country. Soon my country will be twice as big as before—and very strong. Like an elephant."

"Yes, *baas*," Witbooi said. He moved his finger back and forth over the picture, as if to feel it.

"In my country, people are rich—not like here. In my country we have big factories. They make Mercedes-Benz cars."

"Is your country Johannesburg?"

"No, boy. Johannesburg is not a country. My country is Germany. Soon it will grow very big."

"Has your country not been well, *baas*?"

Horst turned away from Witbooi and gave his full attention to the picture of East German émigrés in West Berlin. He looked at the tall buildings, the bright, purposeful people in coats and hats. He stood up and pulled in his stomach. Germany, he thought. I am German.

"Sorry, *baas*," Witbooi said. "The missus says I must fetch you home for lunch. You must have a rest now. The missus says you are not young again."

Witbooi and Horst walked side by side to the car. Witbooi had unbuttoned the top of his coverall. "Independent Namibia," his T-shirt said. "Welcome to the World." —ANTHONY GIANERA

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THE WINNOWING OF MRS. SCHUPING

MRS. SCHUPING lived on a moribund estate that had once been grand enough in trees alone that a shipbuilder scouting live oaks in the eighteenth century had bought the tract for wood to make warships for the British Navy. Oak of that sort, when fitted and shipped into six-inch walls, would not merely withstand or absorb cannonballs but repel them a good way toward their source. Mrs. Schuping did not know this, but she knew she had big old trees, and she patted their flanks when she strolled the grounds.

The house had died. So slatternly, so ratty was it that Mrs. Schuping was afraid to enter it again once she had worked up the courage to go out of it, which was more dangerous. She had been hit by boards twice while leaving the house but never when going in.

There was no such thing as falling-down insurance, an actuarial nicety that flabbergasted and enraged Mrs. Schuping. Falling down was what really plagued houses, therefore that was what you could not protect them from by lottery.

She called herself *Mrs.* Schuping arbitrarily. She had no husband nor had she ever found in the least logical the idea of having one man whom you so designated. Wholly preposterous.

She had a good toaster. It was a four-slice commercial stainless square job, missing its push-down knobs, so that you had to depress the naked notched metal thingies to lower the bread. It looked like you'd need a rag to protect your hand, but you did not. Perhaps if you were hustling breakfasts in a good diner you might, but not slowly, at home. Life was winnowing for Mrs. Schuping.

When she bought the house, she had found a huge collection of opera records, of which she knew nothing except that they sounded ridiculous. This collection she played dutifully, over and over, until it was memorized, until it could not be said that she was ignorant of opera. When she had mastered the collection, she wondered why, and she sailed the records, one by one, into the swamp behind the rotting house. She winnowed the collection of opera records until it was a collection of cardboard boxes, and eventually used those to set her first swamp fire.

Setting the swamp on fire was not a winnowing of her life, but it did winnow the swamp. The burnings seemed to her rather naughty and frivolous, and surprisingly agreeable to look at and to smell. She took an un-adult pleasure in them, along with an adult fear that she might be somehow breaking the law even though the swamp was hers.

The second time she set the mangy tangled tract on fire the sheriff showed up, and she became sure it was the case that you could not burn your own swamp. The sheriff, whom she had not met before, confirmed her anxiety with his opening remark.

"Your *swamp* is on fire," he said, standing about fifteen feet off her right shoulder and slightly behind her.

She turned to him and said, not knowing what in hell else she might, "Yes, it is."

The sheriff stood there regarding first her and then the swamp and the fire, which gave his face a jack-o'-lantern-orange sheen, and said again, "The swamp is *on fire*." The emphasis was meant to confirm his sympathies with having fires, and upon establishing that bond he walked briskly to Mrs. Schuping's side and planted his feet and crossed his arms and cocked back to watch the fire with her in an attitude that suggested he would be content to watch for a good long while. When he breathed, his belt and holster creaked.

Mrs. Schuping could not tell if his affection for the fire was genuine or a trap of the infamous misdirectional-innocuous-talk type favored by country police.

So she said two things. "Sheriff, I set my opera-collection boxes on fire; I confess they were in the swamp." Then, "Sheriff, I do not need a man."

The sheriff looked at the fire, followed it up into the high parts where it licked at the grapevines climbing on the tupelo gums. It was a hot yellow heat in the slack black-ass muddy gloom of a nothing swamp that needed it. He had been taking pure aesthetic enjoyment from the thing until Mrs. Schuping said what she said, which reminded him that they were not free to enjoy this mayhem and that he

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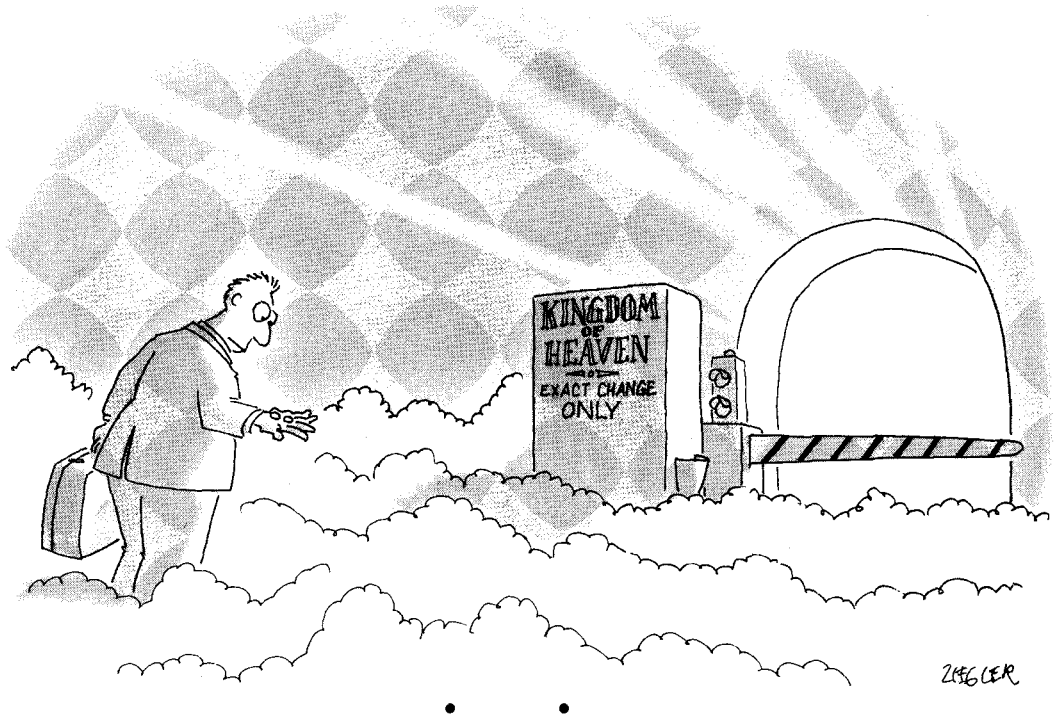

had to undo her concern with his presence. Concern with his presence was—more than his actual presence—*his job* ordinarily; it was how he made his living. This was the hardest thing about being sheriff: you could not go off duty. A city cop could. They even provided locker rooms and showers for them; and he imagined laundry and dry-cleaning takeout services for the uniforms. But a sheriff was the sheriff, and he was always, always up to something. That is why he had had to talk like a fool to this woman to get her to let him watch her fire with her. How else excuse standing in front of five burning acres and saying "on fire"? But it had not worked. And this *man* thing.

"Mizz Shoop, I just—"

"It's Schuping," Mrs. Schuping said.

"Yes'm. I know. I just like to call you Shoop, though."

With this the sheriff again squared off, with a sigh, to watch the fire, whatever he had been about to say cut off by Mrs. Schuping's correcting him. He hoped he had begun the dismantling of her concerns with his presence, both legal and sexual. He was aware that he had not done much toward either end, but he did not want to babble while watching a good fire. Unless she asked him off the property, he'd hold his ground.

Mrs. Schuping was content, having posted her nolo contendere on the fire and her *no desire* on the man, to let him stand there and breathe and creak if he wanted to. She had been a little hard on the sheriff, she thought. It was the legal part that worried her into overstating the sexual part. Not *over*stating, *mis*stating: she did not need a man, but wanting was another question. And if all you had to do to get a big creaking booger like this one was set your back yard on fire, she was all for it.

FOUR months later the sheriff and Mrs. Schuping had their second date. He saw the smoke from the interstate, where he was parked behind the Starvin' Marvin billboard at such a ridiculous pitch that takeoff was nearly vertical and he resisted blasting off for speeders unless provoked entirely. What had been provoking him entirely lately was college kids with their feet out the windows of BMWs, headed for Dade County, Florida, with their socks on. That was making him strike, lift-off or no lift-off. He wondered what it was like for a bass. How some lures got by and some did not. For him it was *pink socks*. In the absence of pink socks, there was smoke over the Fork Swamp.

Mrs. Schuping looked even more fire-lovely than she had at the first fire. This time she saw him before he spoke.

"There won't be a problem with the permit," the sheriff said, instead of the idiocies of last time. There was no problem with the permit because there was no permit, but he thought this was a good way to address those concerns of hers.

The sheriff had lost a little weight. Mrs. Schuping had been on intellectual winnowing excursions, and she saw as a matter of vector analogy the trajectory of the sheriff toward her and the swale of her sexual self. He had a swag or a sway—something—of gut that suggested, even if a bit cartoonishly, a lion. This big fat tub could get on *top* of her, she thought, with no identifiable emotion, looking at the crisp, shrieking, blistering fire she had set with no more ado than a Bic lighter jammed open and a pot she didn't want anymore full of gasoline.

The sheriff took a slow survey of the fire, which was magnificent, and loyal—her little swamp was neatly set on a fork of creeks so that the fire could not get away—and turning back he caught a glance of Mrs. Schuping's profile as she watched the fire and, he thought, him a little, and down a bit he saw her breasts, rather sticking out and firm-looking in the dusky, motley, scrabbled light. Bound up in a sweater and what looked like a salmon-colored bra, through the swamp smoke stinging your eyes, on a forty-year-old woman they could take your breath away. He made to go.

"Good cool fire, Mizz Shoop," the sheriff said. "I've got to go."

"You're leaving, sheriff?"

"It's business, purely business."

To the sheriff she seemed relaxed, legally, and there is *nothing* like a big Ford *pawhoooorn* exit—a little air, a little air and a little time.

MRS. SCHUPING had been through every consciousness and semi-consciousness and unconsciousness and raised- and lowered-consciousness program contributing to every good conscience and bad conscience and middle struggling conscience there is. But now she was a woman in a house so falling apart that the children had taken it off the haunted register, and she was boil-

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ing an egg on a low blue flame. Outside were the large, dark, low-armed oaks.

Also outside, beyond the oaks, were the smoldering ignoble trees. The white, acrid, thin smoke drifting up their charred trunks was ugly. The swamp had powers of recovery that were astounding, though. It was this magical resilience that confirmed Mrs. Schuping as an avid swamp burner. When the swamp came back hairier than it had been before the burning, thicker and nastier, she found the argument for necessary periodic burning, which was of course a principle in good forestry. She was not a pyromaniac, she was a land steward. The trees stood out there fuming and hissing and steaming. Her life continued to winnow.

Beyond the disassembly of her opera holdings, Mrs. Schuping had gradually let go of her once prodigious reading. She had read in all topical lay matters. She had taught herself calculus, and could read *Scientific American* without skipping the math. She had taught herself to weld and briefly tried to sculpt in metal. She gave this up after discovering that all she wanted to sculpt, ever, was a metal sphere, and she could not do it.

She had dallied similarly in hydroponics, artificial intelligence, military science, and dress designing. She had read along Great Book lines and found them mostly a yawn, except for the Great Pornography Books, for which there seemed to be no modern equivalent. She had stopped going out to concerts and movies, etc., which she had done specifically to improve herself, because it got to where after every trip on the long drive back to the ruined estate she wondered what was so damned *given* about improving oneself. The opposite idea seemed at least as tenable. As her tires got worse, it seemed even more tenable, and she began to embrace the idea of winnowing: travel less, do less, it *is* more. She found a grocery that still delivered, and she picked up her box of groceries on the front porch—as far as the boys would go.

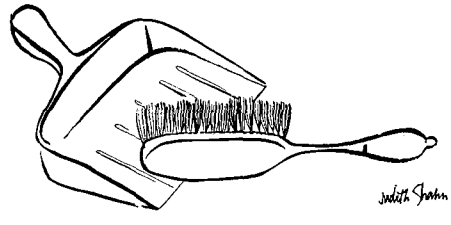
At first she regretted the winnowing, but then she did not: she had had a mind, but nothing had properly got in its way. That happens. The same for bodies: there were good athletes in this world who had never had the right field or the right ball get in their way. It was particle physics when you got down to it, and the numbers of people in the world today and the numbers of things to occupy them made the mechanics of successful collision difficult. So she'd burn her swamp, pat her good trees, cook her egg. She had one old clock radio, a G.E. in a vanilla plastic cabinet with a round dial for a tuner, which she played at night. If there were storms she listened to the static of lightning.

When the swamp had returned in its briary vitriolic vengeance, reminding her of a beard coming out of a face that was too close to hers, she set it afire a fourth time. The fire went taller than before, so she walked around to the front of the house to see if you could see it from there and, if you could, if it looked like the house was on fire, and there was the sheriff, parking his car.

He rolled down the window and said, "I've got you two puppies." She looked in at the front seat and saw that he did. All puppies are cute, but these seemed abnormally cute. She discarded, immediately, protest. She was not going to be the sort, no matter how holed up and eccentric, to refuse a dog because of the responsibility and other nonsense.

"What kind are they?"

"The kind dogfighters give me just before they have themselves a convention." The sheriff opened the door and let the puppies out and got out himself. They all walked back to the fire. At one point the sheriff misjudged the ground and veered sharply into Mrs. Schuping and nearly knocked her down. He was so big and tight that he felt like the oak walls of the ships that flung cannonballs back, which Mrs. Schuping did not know had made her trees, under which they now walked, attractive to a shipbuilder two hundred years before.



The fire was a good one. There was a screaming, out of human register, as oxygen and carbon clawed each other to pieces, going through peat and leaf and the dirt that somehow stayed up in the leaves, even when it rained, giving the swamp its dusty look that would never be right for *National Geographic*. The dirt in the trees presumably turned to glass, and maybe that was why, Mrs. Schuping thought, the fire always sounded like things breaking. Tiny things breaking, a big fiery bull in the shop.

Without an inkling of premeditation, she turned to the sheriff, who was breathing and creaking there in standard fashion, and balled her fist, and very slowly brought it to his stomach and ground it mock-menacingly into him as far as it would go, which was about an inch. At this the sheriff put his hand on the back of her neck and did not look from the fire. They regarded the fire in that attitude, and the puppies romped, and in the strange

WHAT THE SEER SAID

She said I would see the future,
that is to say, my father,
through an ophthalmologic device.

That man was no good, she warned,
but I persisted: *No one,*
no one has done me any harm.

The machine moved on silent wheels.
She fastened my eyes to two wells.
I was pasted to the deep.

The first image was of jangling
kaleidoscopic angles;
the second, inchoate dark.

From a constricted throat
I brought a few words: *My father*
was a generous man—but remote.

At *remote* the darkness unveiled
a mist-becalmed lake and pale
sky and hills like loaves—

blue on blue on blue,
undramatic, unconfused
as the fan of Ma Yuan.

So this was my father's house,
this courteous, ancestral place!
I lifted my eyes, in relief,

and tasted the mortal cold.
I awoke by the water's edge, old,
deprived, at home, at peace.

—Jane Cooper

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orange light they all looked posed for a family portrait at a discount department store.

BEFORE going into the house, the sheriff knocked the mud off his boots, then decided that would not do and took his boots off and left them outside the back door on the porch. Mrs. Schuping put two eggs on to boil. The sheriff, who she thought might go three hundred pounds, should not eat an egg, she knew, but it was what you ate after a swamp fire—boiled hard, halved, heavy salt and pepper, and tasting somehow of smoke—and it was all she had, anyway.

They peeled the eggs at the metal table and put the shells in the aluminum pot the eggs had cooked in. Mrs. Schuping peeled hers neatly, no more than four pieces of shell, but the sheriff rolled his on the table under his palm until it was a fine mosaic. He rubbed the tiny bits of shell off with his thumb.

"I love how there are still these little pockets of the eighties."

• •

WHEN the sheriff came out of the bathroom and stood by the bed, Mrs. Schuping became frightened beyond the normal, understandable apprehensions a woman can have before going to bed with a new man, especially the largest one it is conceivable to go to bed with. She also had a concern for the bed itself, and even for the structural capacity of the house—but that was hysterical; the sheriff was safely upstairs, and no matter what he did he would not get any heavier. Something else frightened her. It was as if a third party were in the room, a kind of silent presence, and then she realized what it was. The sheriff, naked, without his creaking leather, was quiet for the first time, a soundless man. It gave her goose bumps.

"Get in."

Mrs. Schuping decided it was best to trust a man this large in the execution of his own desire, and let him near-smother her. He made a way for air for her over one of his shoulders and began what he was about, which seemed to be an altogether private program at first but then got better, until she could tell that the sheriff was not simply a locomotive on his own track, and things got evenly communal, traces of smoky fire in the room, but enough air. Mrs. Schuping thought of winnowing and sailing records and her mother and of how long a gizzard has to cook to be tender, how much longer than a liver, and she lost track until she heard the sheriff breathing, about to die like a catfish on a hot sidewalk, and stop.

"Mizz Shoop," the sheriff said, when he could talk, "this is my philosophy of life and it proves it. Almost everything can happen. Yingyang."

"What would be an example, sheriff?"

"Well—this," he said, his arms arcing in the space over them and reballasting the bed. "And did you hear about them boys killed that girl for p— Excuse me. For sex?"

The sheriff then related the details of a rape case he had worked on. It was not the sort of talk she expected to follow a First Time, but she let him go on and found that she did not mind it. The sheriff had set in motion the pattern of rude and somewhat random speech that would follow their love-making in the high springy bed under the ripped ceiling. You would be allowed to say whatever was on your mind without regard to etiquette or setting. Once, it embarrassed her to recall, she declaimed apropos of nothing while they were still breathless, "Listen. I have a father and a mother. I'm a *real person*."

To this the sheriff firmly rejoined, "I think the whole goddam country has lost its fucking mind."

"I don't doubt it," Mrs. Schuping said.

They could talk like this for hours, their meanings rarely intersecting. The last thing the sheriff said before leaving that first night was "Fifty pounds in the morning. They'll be all right under the porch." Mrs. Schuping slept well, wondering fifty pounds of what under the house before she drifted off.

The sheriff had initiated a pattern with this remark, too, but she did not know it. She would find that the sheriff

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was given to talking about things that he did not bother to preface or explain, and that she preferred not asking what the hell he was talking about. Whatever the hell he was talking about would become apparent, and so far the sheriff had delivered no unwanted surprises. She saw just about what she was getting.

In the river of her winnowing life, the sheriff represented a big boulder in the bed of the dwindling stream. It eventually would be eroded from underneath and would settle and maybe sink altogether. Mrs. Schuping, therefore, did not find the facts of her aggressively winnowing life and the solid, vigorous mass of her new man to be in conflict at all.

She had never known a man so *naturally* unrefined. Despite his bulk, the sheriff gave her a good feeling. That was as specific as she could be about it. He gives me a good feeling, she thought, marvelling at the suspicious simplicity of the sentiment.

She had a dream of going into the swamp and finding her opera records unharmed and retrieving them and playing them for the sheriff, who, as his appreciation of them increased, began to dance with her in a ballroom that somehow appeared in her house, the operas having become waltzes, and began to lose weight, becoming as slender as a bullfighter; then, in the swamp again, she found the records hung in the trees and melted into long, twisted shapes that suggested, of all things, the severely herniated intestines of a chimpanzee she had once seen in a cheap roadside wild-animal attraction. She woke up glad to wake up. She would look for no records and wish no diet upon the sheriff. "Have my *head* examined," she muttered, getting out of bed.

In a very vague way Mrs. Schuping had decided—before the decisions and lack of decisions that set her life on its course of winnowing—that having her head examined was going to be the certain price if she did not begin to clear a few, or many, things out of it. She saw at the end of theories of consciousness and lay physics and broad familiarity with things topical and popular a wreck of the mind, her mind, on the rocks of pointless business and information. None of that knowledge, good or bad, simple or sophisticated, was ever going to allow her to do anything except more of *it:* drive another eighty miles to another touring concert or exhibition, read another article on the mating dynamics of the American anole.

She decided that a green lizard doing pushups with his little red centerboard coming out of his throat was one thing, but if she *read* about it anymore, saw any more stylized drawings of "distensible throat flaps" on vectors heading for each other like units in a war game, she was going to be in trouble. This was a petty, flighty kind of fed-upness to reach, and not carefully thought out, she knew, but she did not care. If you looked carefully at bee No. W-128, who was vibrating at such and such a frequency, wagging his butt at 42° on the compass . . . God. Of all her pre-winnowing interests, this arcane science was her favorite, yet, oddly enough, it was the first to go. It had looked insupportable in a way that, say, *Time* had not. Yet over the years she had decided, once *Time* etc. had also been abandoned, that the lizards and bees and flow mechanics were supportable in the extreme by comparison—as were the weirdly eclectic opera records more justified than the morning classical-music shows on public radio—but at once she had opted for winnowing there was no pulling back. "I'm going *beyond* Walden," she told herself, and soon thereafter began eying the cluttered swamp, which was not simple enough.

So she winnowed to prevent having her head examined. If it were to be, she wanted them to find nothing in it. She knew enough about the process. Her mother had had *her* head examined, many times. Mrs. Schuping did not like her mother, so that was all she needed to know about having your head examined. Not for her.

She looked out the window that morning and saw a man with a white stripe down each pant leg walk away from the house and get in a yellow truck, which then drove off. When she investigated she found a fifty-pound sack of dog food on the porch and the two puppies scratching at it very fast, as if they would dig in spoonfuls to China.

"You've got someone's shirt caught on your left horn."

AFTER their first night together, the sheriff arrived without Mrs. Schuping's having to set the swamp on fire. The sheriff had established the two things he would do for or to Mrs. Schuping. One was talk trash in bed and the other was supply her with goods and services that came through his connections as sheriff. After the dog food, which had belonged to the county police dogs until her puppies got it, a crew of prisoners showed

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up one morning and painted the entire porch, which surrounded her house, with yellow road paint, giving the house the look of a cornball flying saucer about to take off. The sheriff appeared that night—the fluorescent paint more than ever inspectable then—beaming with pride. He did not remark upon it directly or ask Mrs. Schuping how she liked it, but from his face, which in its pride nearly partook of the same yellow glow, it was obvious that he was sure she liked her hideous new paint job. She could not deny it.

She had watched the crew from a lawn chair, drinking coffee while they changed her haunted-looking, unpainted, unannounced house into something like ballpark mustard with mica in it, and never asked them what they thought they were doing. Nor had she asked the man with the shotgun what he was doing. And now it did not seem proper to ask the sheriff. The dog food was done, the porch under which the puppies were to live was done, and something else would be done, and it was in the spirit of winnowing to let it be done.

But in bed that night, before they got to the sheriff's spontaneous trash talking, she did let out one question.

"Listen," she said. "Isn't this, prisoners and . . ." She made a kind of scalloping motion with her hand in the air, where he could see it. "I appreciate it, but isn't it . . . *graft* or something?"

The sheriff took a deep breath as if impatient, but she already knew he would not, if he were impatient, show it; he was a man who could talk about rape in bed, but in other important ways he was a gentleman. He was breathing to compose.

"If you see something I have," he said, "there is something behind it I have given." He breathed for a while.

"Law is a series of *deals*," he said next, "and so is law enforcement." More breathing. "Nobody in law enforcement, unlike *law*, makes money *near* what the time goes into it."

They looked at the ceiling.

"If you don't do Wall Street, this is how you do it." A deep sigh.

"That dogfighter I got your puppies from made fifteen thousand dollars the next week in one *hour*, and I let him do it, and I did not take a dime. You have two good dogs he would have knocked in the head."

"Next Wednesday is Eddie's birthday, but, because of school and after-school activities, next Saturday will be Eddie's birthday observed."

• •

Mrs. Schuping was sorry she had asked and never did again. But if she saw the sheriff studying something about the place she might attempt to steer him off. He seemed to look askance at her mixed and beat-up pots and pans one night, and, fearful that he would strip the county-prison kitchen of its commercial cookware—perhaps inspired by the odd presence of her commercial toaster—and stuff it all into hers, she informed him casually that broken-in pots were a joy to handle.

She missed his citing for the deck and the boardwalk into the swamp, however. The one clue, mumbled in his sleep, "Ground Wolmanized, that'll be hard," she did not know how to interpret until the ground-contact-rated, pressure-treated posts were being put in the yard behind her house and on back into the swamp by black fellows with posthole diggers and the largest, shiniest, knottiest, most gruesome and handsome arms she had ever seen.

She watched them, as she had watched the housepainters, this time putting brandy in her coffee—something she had tried once before and not liked the taste of. Sitting there drinking spiked coffee, she felt herself becoming a character in the gravitational pull of the sheriff despite, she realized, efforts nearly all her life not to become a character—except for calling herself Mrs. Schuping.

The boardwalk through the thinned swamp looked miraculous, as if the burning had been a plan of architectural landscaping. The handsome, lean swamp, the walk suggesting a miniature railroad trestle going out into it, resembled a park. If you winnowed and got down pretty clean and were normal, she thought, and something happened—like a big-bubba sheriff and thousands of dollars of windfall contracting and a completely different kind of life than you had had—and you started becoming a character, and you paid nothing for it and did not scheme for it, and it reversed your winnowing, and you liked brandy suddenly, at least in coffee, while watching men who put classical sculpture to shame, was it your fault?

—PADGETT POWELL

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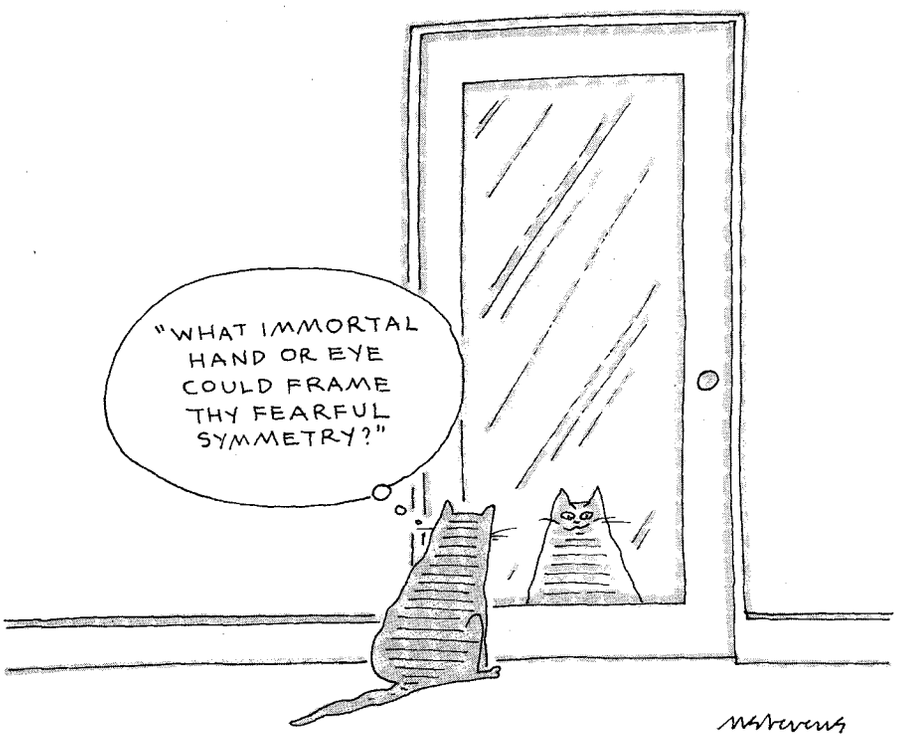
A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE HOUSE OF HASHEM

IT was a Friday evening in Amman —as placid as most evenings have been since palpable tension descended on the city with the start of the Gulf crisis, last August—and I had heard that Abu Zant was to deliver a homily at the mosque of the Islamic College, so I decided to go and hear him. From my hotel it was only a ten-minute walk—refreshing in the early fall, when the air turns balmy after sundown. Sheikh Abdul Munim Abu Zant is Amman's most outspoken cleric, a fiery orator, given to colorful turns of phrase and occasional rabble-rousing. He is also a member of the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood, and was one of the victors in the parliamentary elections in the fall of 1989— the first such elections in Jordan in twenty-two years. It would be an exaggeration to call Abu Zant a popular leader—the election results notwithstanding, Jordanians do not seem much tempted by Islamic radicalism—but he can nearly always draw a crowd at a mosque on a Friday. So, shortly before seven, I made my way along a wide avenue full of speeding cars, around a traffic circle with a gushing fountain in the center and a banner that proclaimed, in Arabic, "THE ARAB PENINSULA WILL BECOME ANOTHER VIETNAM," and past a line of handsome villas and public buildings, until I arrived at the mosque, a low-lying structure surrounded by a ten-foot wall. Its entrance is a modest one, on a narrow side street, and I would have missed it had I not followed a gathering crowd.

I took off my shoes in the doorway, tucked them under my arm, and entered a large room, which was bare except for Oriental rugs covering the floor. The men in the room, nearly all wearing Western clothes, stood in parallel lines, facing east; the women, in head scarves (a few also wore veils), moved quickly to a section concealed by a curtain. Many of the worshippers had come with their children. A wide range of Amman's social hierarchy appeared to be represented, although no one looked poor, and I was surprised at the high proportion of people in their teens and twenties. Policemen, wearing berets and light-blue shirts with navy-blue epaulets, stood unobtrusively around the edges of the room. By seven-fifteen or so, the mosque was overflowing with what I estimated to be about three thousand worshippers. The men responded to the crowding by shuffling closer together, keeping their ranks as crisply aligned as those of a drill team on a parade ground.



The prayer service, during which the men dropped to their knees and bowed to the floor every few minutes, lasted only a quarter of an hour, and was followed by Abu Zant's warmup speaker, who proceeded to beg God to send snakes and flies—already abundant in the Saudi desert—to torment the infidels whose occupation had placed the holy Muslim shrines in jeopardy. Abu Zant himself opened with more restraint, praying to God to send the foreigners home regretting what they had done. Abu Zant is a small man, shaped like a jelly roll, who frequently chops the air with his short arms for emphasis. He wore the traditional dress of the Islamic clergy—a black robe and a white turban piped with red. As his sermon progressed, his words took on increasing passion, and his voice rose to a high pitch, transformed into a screech by a flawed amplifier system. "The battle is not between Iraq and America but between Islam and the Crusaders," he declared. "It is not between Saddam and Bush but between the infidel leaders and the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, peace be with him! . . . Why is Iraq the focus? Because the Zionist and American enemies don't wish to see the Arabs or the Muslims possess any power that can stand against Israel. . . . The Saudis have lost their credentials as Muslims, by allowing foreign forces to come to our Holy Land, which only God can protect! They have brought the Americans, and what the Americans have brought to the Holy Land is V.D. and AIDS! The Royal Family of Saudi Arabia is a traitor to Islam!"

The assembly seemed to find Abu Zant's performance more entertaining than rousing. On cue, the men dutifully shouted back "God is Great!" and "The Koran is our constitution!" and "Holy War is our plan!" and "To die for the cause of God does not frighten us!" I wondered whether the women were doing the same thing, behind their curtain. As for the children, after fifteen minutes or so of Abu Zant their

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attention flagged, and more and more of them began wandering around and joining up with one another in the corners of the room to play. After half an hour, Abu Zant realized that he was losing his audience and brought the homily to an end. The speaker who followed was less riveting, and the men soon began chatting among themselves. In the growing disarray, women with their children in hand appeared on the floor of the mosque to summon their husbands home, and by the time Abu Zant's successor had finished, the mosque was half empty. As those of us who had persevered straggled out, a muezzin chanted, his melancholy voice piped over the rooftops of the quarter by a loudspeaker attached to the minaret. No one seemed fired up enough to take his political feelings into the street, as had been the case in the early days of the crisis, when mass demonstrations were commonplace. During the month I spent in Jordan, the only public protests I encountered were at Friday prayers, and now and then at small-scale, street-corner rallies. I saw anti-American banners at many intersections, and photographs of Saddam Hussein in shop and car windows, but the virulent emotions of the early days seemed to have been spent. That is not to say that the crisis had dropped from consciousness—people talked about it endlessly, with anguish in their voices—but the Jordan I know is a rather serene place, and though it is probably as susceptible to manipulation as other societies, I saw no sign that the government wanted it angry. The worshippers at the mosque seemed in an affable frame of mind as they filed out. Even after a good-sized dose of Abu Zant, they were more exhilarated by the prospect of supper, I suspect, than by the prospect of Holy War in the Gulf.

"As it happened, my work as an accountant transcended the genre."

• •

ON a bright morning about a week later, I took a cab to the opening session of a three-day international congress bringing together nationalist and leftist forces from around the Arab world in support of Saddam Hussein. It was at the Royal Cultural Centre, which was constructed with some of the wealth that had filtered into Jordan since the start of the oil boom in the nineteen-seventies. A large auditorium of modern design, the Centre is part of an oil-built neighborhood of new office buildings, mosques, shopping centers, and luxury hotels; the University of Jordan, the Royal Scientific Society, and the University Hospital are all nearby. A banner on the Centre's façade read "ARABS AND MUSLIMS UNITE AGAINST THE AMERICAN AND ZIONIST INVADERS." Another, fluttering a few yards away, proclaimed, "A VICTORY FOR IRAQ IS A VICTORY FOR PALESTINE."

The congress was organized by a coalition that calls itself JANDA—for Jordanian Arab National Democratic Alliance—and emerged out of a dozen left-of-center political parties and groups, clandestine for decades, that have taken root since the 1989 elections. King Hussein had agreed to place the congress under his patronage—a conventional gesture in Jordan, and by no means an endorsement. He had disappointed the sponsors by sending a surrogate—Suleiman Arar, the Speaker of the lower house of the parliament—to make the keynote speech. According to the newspapers, more than a hundred political parties and groups were represented, including supporters of Saddam from North Africa, the Sudan, Lebanon, Yemen, and the Palestine Liberation Organization. The papers also said that there would be delegations from Egypt and Syria, whose governments oppose the Iraqi leader, but when I entered the crowded lobby I was handed a hastily printed notice saying that a member of the Egyptian delegation had been "detained at the Cairo airport and prevented from flying to Jordan." In fact, no Egyptians showed up—and, to no one's surprise, the Syrians were not there, either.

The stars of the congress were the veteran terrorist leaders George Habash and Nayef Hawatmeh, who are the heads, respectively, of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, constituent organizations of the P.L.O. Both men had been expelled from Jordan in 1970, after the failure of the P.L.O.'s "Black September" uprising against King Hussein, and, though both had since endorsed Yasir Arafat's peace overtures to Israel, neither had been permitted to return. As I entered the main hall, which was embellished with two life-size photographs of King Hussein and his brother, Crown Prince Hassan, the crowd was cheering for Hawatmeh, who descended the center aisle, both hands raised high in the "V for victory" sign. The cheers were even lustier for Habash, who is a more charismatic figure; as he entered the hall, limping

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THE MINK

A mink ruffles
A snowdrift as
Softly as air,

A lie staggers
Off the wharf
And is lost

To tongue; even
In lands perpetually
Cold, keys melt

In the hands
Of an unworthy
Janitor. What story

Can be told
By the scraps
Left behind? The

Candle rises from
Its place beside
The bier, withdrawing

Unsteadily, and mugwort
Simmers in the
Iron kettle. The

Scuba diver awakens
With a headache
And lights a

Cigarette. His toes
Are cold. Misanthropic
Eagles stay aloft

In the lucid
Air, where every
Book has a

Mind of its
Own. Mugwort simmers
In the iron

Kettle. A narrow
Yellow leaf falls
Like a canoe

Upon a broad
Green leaf. In
Wisconsin, a man

The last war
Spared is out
Fishing, standing in

The middle of
The lake in
The middle of

The night in
The middle of
The rain. Every

Moment we reveal
All of our
Religious beliefs. An

End to the
Varieties of randomness
There is none,

But you'll never
Teach your shoes
To tie themselves.

The wicked saint
Eases back on
The throttle, and

The drudging elephant
Hauls on his
Harnesses' chains. Nothing

So shiny as
A shiny monument.
Ministers, ministers, why

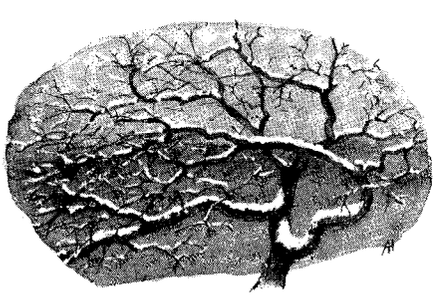
Do you put
Extra blankets on
Your beds?

—JEFFREY GUSTAVSON

• •

slightly from a stroke he suffered a few years ago, the galleries erupted with rhythmic P.F.L.P. chants and the familiar ululations of Arab peasant women (though it is doubtful whether any peasant women were in the audience). Arafat himself was not at the congress, and when I asked some of his supporters about this I found they were as surprised as I was, since it was unlike him to leave such a forum to his P.L.O. rivals.

By the time the program began, the audience, mostly male, had reached about two thousand. It appeared, by its dress, to be composed overwhelmingly of Western-oriented intellectuals, with a sprinkling of rural people and Islamics in traditional costume. On the whole, those who spoke were not so much anti-American as profoundly opposed to American intervention in the Gulf. Suleiman Arar declared that the crisis "could have been solved" had it not been for American involvement. "The Americans made a serious mistake in rushing to Saudi Arabia," he said. "A military outcome is not the answer. The Arab solution is still the best, and it can be achieved at the least cost." According to Hawatmeh, the Gulf crisis was "purely an Arab problem, and the United States has nothing to do with it." Habash struck a note I had heard many times since my arrival in Jordan: "At first, I was opposed to Iraq's invasion, but now I consider the American intervention a much greater threat to the Arab people, and I support Iraq one hundred per cent." On the afternoon of the third day, the congress issued a communiqué calling, in the florid language typical of Arab discourse, for American withdrawal from the Gulf and for further Arab diplomatic efforts. Following the issuance of the communiqué, a delegation, including Habash and Hawatmeh, was received by the King, who, according to press reports, offered his visitors a briefing on the latest developments in the Gulf and endorsed in a general way the proposals of the congress for a negotiated resolution.



A few days later, I stopped by the office of Dr. Mamdouh Abbadi, the executive director of JANDA. Abbadi, a Bedouin by origin, is an ophthalmologist, trained at universities in Istanbul and London, and is the president of the Jordan Medical Association. JANDA's objective, he told me, was to promote multiparty democracy and human rights in Jordan—political parties, as such, are still banned there—and to build up the strength of the democratic left for a challenge to the fundamentalists in the next elections. Many of JANDA's activists had been imprisoned in the past for political reasons, he said, and most of them had had their pass-

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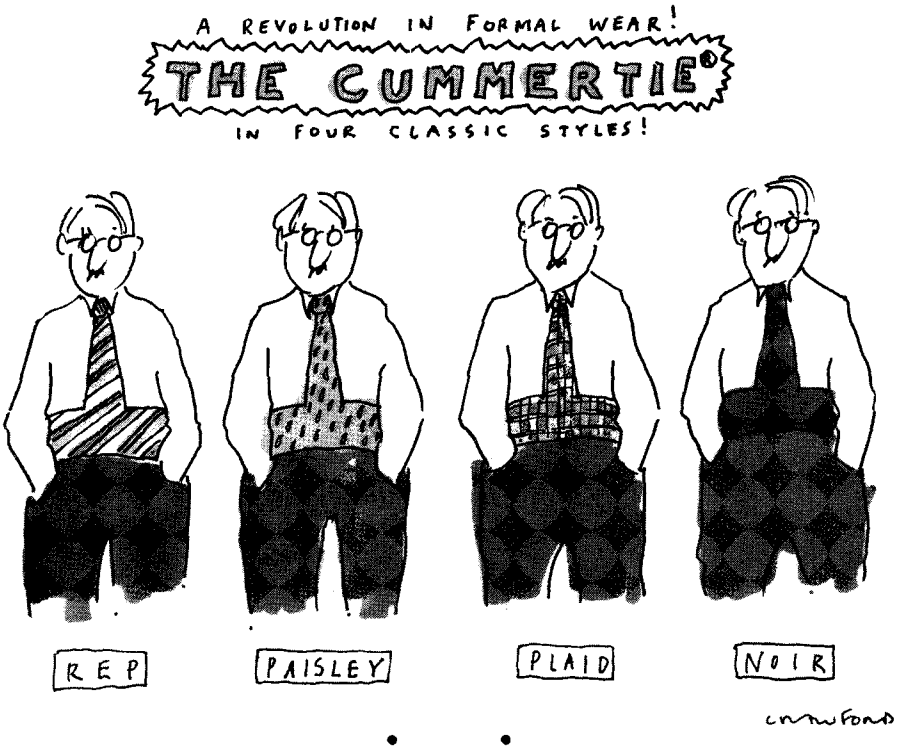

ports confiscated at one time or another, but Jordan had now made a decision to embrace democracy and human rights. He lamented the fact that the West, having created the model for democracy, was now allied with such anti-democratic societies as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and he maintained that the JANDA congress had been called not so much to support Saddam Hussein, whose human-rights practices he deplored, as to express the resentment of Arabs at Western meddling in Arab affairs.

In Washington, on the day I saw Abbadi, a State Department spokesman expressed "dismay" at Jordan's playing host to the JANDA congress, noted that the delegates had threatened American interests and displayed "overt anti-Americanism," and said that the Administration was "appalled by the statements that were made." Echoing this line, the Washington *Post* ran an editorial, entitled "King Hussein's Party," that blasted the King for giving "a stage, sounding board and personal audience to the conferring Arab radicals, people who can only have contempt for a leader like him whose sources of power are largely foreign and whose principal goal is to preserve his throne." The editorial characterized the King's patronage of the congress as "pathetic," and added, "It is tempting to write off this exasperating figure." Having been reprinted in the *International Herald Tribune*, the editorial was available on Amman newsstands, and its overstatement produced shock waves—not only in official circles but among the normally imperturbable foreign journalists who had gathered to cover the crisis. For the next couple of days it was the talk of Amman. When I questioned Jordanian officials about the statement and the editorial, they replied that JANDA had held an open, democratic meeting, outside the auspices of government, and that Washington, which for years had been urging wider freedoms on Jordan, had thus been forced to swallow some of its own medicine. In the view of these officials, Washington did not like the taste. My own interpretation—of the State Department reaction, at least—was that the Bush Administration, having up to that point opposed Jordan's efforts to settle the crisis by diplomacy, had decided to criticize the congress, which was hardly an event of monumental importance, with an eye to intimidating King Hussein.

BY conventional estimates, more than half of Jordan's three and a half million people are Palestinians. They are generally regarded as loyal and productive; all of them hold Jordanian citizenship and—except, perhaps, for access to the country's ruling circles—enjoy the same political and economic rights as Jordanians. During Black September, the Palestinians showed appreciation for the fairness with which they were being treated in Jordan by siding overwhelmingly with the King against the P.L.O. About two hundred and twenty thousand Palestinians live in refugee camps, but nearly all the others have settled in Jordan's cities; Amman itself is preponderantly Palestinian. Many Palestinians have become very rich.

Amer Salti, the manager of an Amman bank, lives with his wife, his mother, his children, and an Asian maid in an imposing stone villa in a good neighborhood. He is among the Palestinians who have prospered. Born of middle-class parents in Safad, which is now a city in Israel, he fled to Syria with his family in 1948, then migrated to the West Bank, while it was part of Jordan. His father and his grandfather died within a year of each other from the stress of losing everything in the 1948 upheaval, and he was brought up by his mother and an older sister, who together set up a prosperous dressmaking business. Salti attended missionary schools, excelled in his studies, and went to Brigham Young University, in Utah, on a scholarship. He returned with a Ph.D. in political science. Now fifty, Salti climbed the professional ladder at several international banks in Amman until early 1989, when he joined with some friends to organize a branch of the Arab Banking Corporation.

"Any Arab with an education was welcomed here," Salti said, as we sat in his handsomely appointed office. "The Palestinians built the private sector, and the King gave us every encouragement. In tough times, when jobs were scarce, the Jordanians grumbled about our control of the private sector, but they held the top positions in the civil service. Only Palestinians with ties to the P.L.O. or to more radical groups had problems. They were sometimes harassed by the *mukhabarat*—the secret police. But the rest of us were fully accepted. Amman was a good place to do business. The government paid for the infrastructure, with a minimum of kickbacks and corruption, and we did the building. We got investment capital from Palestinians working in the Gulf states; they made a lot of money, but they were really not wanted there, so they built their homes here in Amman. This is a good city to live

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in. It's clean, well governed, with good schools for our kids—a little stodgy, I suppose, but with wholesome values. The Palestinians made it what it is today, because we had stability here, in a region of permanent instability."

The Palestinians in the camps, of course, have a less attractive life. One morning when I had no appointments, I hitched a ride out to the Baqaa camp, about fifteen miles from downtown Amman on the Damascus road. The camp was established in 1967, shortly after the Six-Day War, to serve the Palestinians fleeing from the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, and it is administered by UNRWA—the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, founded in 1949, after the first Arab-Israeli war. The tents that provided temporary accommodations gave way long ago to cement-block shelters, but the residents, whether they were born in Jordan or across the river, do not forget that they are Palestinian, and still talk—though wistfully—of going home. When the Baqaa camp was set up, it was in the country; now it is at the northern edge of Greater Amman. Having been there several times before, I knew the routine, which was that I should have obtained police permission for the visit. Though I had been warned that procedures had been tightened since the start of the *intifada*, it was my experience that the Jordanians were not sticklers for police regulations, so, being short on time, I had decided to chance it. I went directly to the office of the camp-services officer, which is not far from the main entrance. He was hardly delighted to see me, and hesitated when I asked if I might tour the facilities. A plainclothes policeman was sitting nearby, and replied to his glance with a shrug, whereupon he consented, and sent me on my way with a guide, who, he explained, was from the government's Office of Palestinian Affairs. (I took this to be a euphemism for the ubiquitous *mukhabarat*.)

In the company of my guide, I walked to a school that had been under construction in 1988, when I last visited. The Chinese government donated it to the Palestinians, building it with Chinese labor and supplying it with Chinese equipment. UNRWA had designated it a preparatory school for girls, and on entering the schoolyard I found a hundred or so well-scrubbed, healthy-looking pre-adolescents in head scarves and gray-green smocks, playing and chattering with great intensity. After a tour of the halls, which were lined with patriotic and nostalgic posters of Palestine, and a look at some classrooms, I was invited to have coffee with several of the teachers. Our conversation soon became a political discussion, in English, that seemed indiscreet in the presence of my guide, but which he either did not understand or chose to ignore.

One of the reasons that the King had for so many years hesitated to authorize elections, the teachers agreed, was the fear of a divisive contest for power between Palestinians and Jordanians. But in the 1989 elections the Palestinians living in Jordan, acting on the advice of the P.L.O., kept a low profile. They offered no slates of their own, and only ten of eighty seats in the parliament were filled by identifiable Palestinians, all of them having run either as independents or as Islamic fundamentalists. The decision to keep a low profile, the teachers said, had emerged from a feeling of solidarity with the King, and he had vindicated their confidence by not abandoning Saddam Hussein after the invasion of Kuwait. Whereas the West viewed Saddam as a brutal violator of human rights, to Palestinians he was first and foremost an Arab prepared to stand up in defense of their cause. Since the invasion of Kuwait, they said, morale had soared among the Palestinians, who saw in the crisis the first prospect in many years of ending the political paralysis in the region and getting their own state.

After leaving the school, my guide and I wandered for a while around the camp, which exhibits—not coincidentally—the vibrancy of a West Bank town. The heart of the camp is the outdoor market, and it was crowded with women and children buying fruit and meat at open stalls roofed with corrugated iron. Peddlers sold clothes from rickety pushcarts, along with shoes, hardware, and the sundries that Americans might buy in drugstores. I passed barbershops, video shops, camera shops, and music shops, from which emanated the wail of the latest pop hits from Cairo. The streets were rutted and dirty. The smells were varied, and not always pleasant. Kids kicked soccer balls among the passersby. At the edges of the market I found workshops where cars and bicycles were being repaired and doors, cabinets, and sofas were being manufactured. Beyond were the residential quarters—street after street of cement-block houses, some covered with flowers or vines, some embellished with a lone oleander, all grim to the Western eye but hardly worse than the homes of the poor on the West Bank. They had acquired an air of permanence—as if they would remain occupied long after the last Israeli soldier left the occupied territories.

When I got back to the UNRWA office, I found the camp-services officer and the police agent sitting and smoking with a tall, wrinkled man who had gold teeth and a gray stubble beard and wore a black cape edged in silver over a dark-blue suit. He introduced himself to me as Sheikh Abdul Razak Weheidi, one of the *mukhtars* of the camp. I had visited enough camps in the region to know that they are organized around the Palestinian villages from which the refugees originated. Each unit is headed by a *mukhtar*, who is generally selected by some combination of seniority and consensus. In many instances, the *mukhtars* serve as a source of information for the police, while at the same time serving their people as protectors and advocates. Baqaa has some fifty of these village organizations. Sheikh Weheidi was a Bedouin, born in Beersheba in 1931. He told me that he fled to Gaza in 1948 and to Jordan in 1967, and now served as *mukhtar* of some five thousand Baqaa refugees with Beersheba roots. "All the people in this camp are ready to fight the Americans," he volunteered after I told him that I was American. His tone was unemotional, as if he were reporting on a disagreement between two Beersheba families. "They are all with Saddam Hussein," he said. "We care nothing for the Kuwaitis. All the money they have given the Arabs is not worth one millionth of their total wealth. Kuwait sent its money to the West, and then the Americans sent it to Israel. That tells me that Kuwait is an ally of Israel, and that Saddam is on our side. We are not against the American people. The Americans are good people. But we are hostile to American policy. The honorable leaders among the Arabs—and

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I place King Hussein at the top of that list—will soon declare a Holy Jihad against America, and anyone who dies in the struggle will be a martyr and go to paradise."

AFTER I had been in Jordan for a couple of weeks, Queen Noor agreed to see me. Normally, she is more readily accessible, but since the Gulf crisis began dozens of reporters had come to Amman in search of stories, and I had to wait my turn. At the designated hour, a young soldier at the wheel of a black limousine picked me up at my hotel. He was listening to Arabic love songs on the radio when I climbed into the back seat, but as we pulled out of the driveway he switched the dial to an Israeli station that played rock and roll. The drive to the palace took us across the city, a place of steep hills and deep ravines, not quite free of the vestiges of earlier times. The old Amman was built along an ancient riverbed in the widest of the ravines; it contains a magnificent amphitheatre, constructed by the Romans two millennia ago, and a labyrinth of tiny shops along streets laid out by Arabs who arrived early in this century. Modern Amman is on the crests of the hills—a city of wide boulevards and soaring overpasses, luxurious villas of diverse and often fanciful design, and rather ordinary-looking public buildings, the most undistinguished of which is surely the fortress headquarters of the *mukhabarat*, at one of the central intersections. The roller-coaster layout creates various sensations: from a busy street of stylish shops and medium-rise office buildings one can look down into a valley of Bedouin tents and herdsmen tending flocks of goats; the dome of a mosque that appears to be on the next street is really on the summit of an adjacent hill and may take ten minutes of circuitous driving to reach.

My driver's destination was the back entrance of the palace grounds, which took us out of the settled part of the city, past patches of farmland and clusters of anti-aircraft missile launchers. As we neared the gate, he tuned in the Arab radio station again, apparently for the edification of the guards, who took a long hard look at us before waving us with their automatic rifles into the royal compound, a complex of low-lying, neatly tended, closely guarded palaces spread over a forested hilltop. Its first royal occupant was Abdullah, Jordan's founder and the grandfather of King Hussein, who lived in an undistinguished house in the town center until, in 1924, he chose to build a home on this property. Since Abdullah's time, King Hussein has added buildings for living and working, all of them on a comparably restrained scale. Though each is different, they are rendered harmonious by the lush gardens in which they are set, by a simplicity of design and modesty of ornamentation, and by their uniform construction of the white limestone quarried from the hills that run from Amman to Jerusalem.

Amman has been settled since the Bronze Age. It took its name in Biblical times, from the Ammonites—a tribe about whom a testy God once said to Moses, "You shall never seek their welfare or their good all your life long." During the Roman era, it was a wealthy market town, and with the coming of Christianity it served as the seat of influential bishops. In the seventh century, it became a major Muslim city; then a gradual decline set in, and in the fifteenth century it was abandoned to famine and plagues. In the late nineteenth century, the Ottomans settled several thousand Circassians—Muslims from the Caucasus, in flight from the czar—near the Roman amphitheatre, and the town remained Circassian until 1905, the year when the railroad the Ottomans were building to Mecca reached Amman, bringing with it several thousand Arab laborers. It was not until Abdullah decided after the First World War to make Amman the capital of Transjordan, however, that the city began to grow. The first wave of Palestinian refugees arrived in 1948 and the second in 1967, each wave a hundred thousand or more. In the nineteen-eighties, the population reached a million, a figure it has now substantially surpassed.

"No, you may not ask a really stupid question."

During my visits over the years, I have always been astonished at how well put together the city is. It has avoided the unsightly improvised look of other Third World cities that suddenly exploded in size, and it does not exhibit the shabbiness and squalor that characterize the other capitals of the Arab world. The government made a deliberate effort, in the words of Abdur-Rauf Rawabdeh, who was Amman's mayor from 1983 to 1989, to

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Comprised basically of bamboo and leather, the ski poles used in the early days of The Aspens were carry-overs from pre-lift times, when their primary purpose was helping one climb up the mountain rather than ski down it. Obviously, design options then didn't include angled shafts, contoured grips or a choice of colors.

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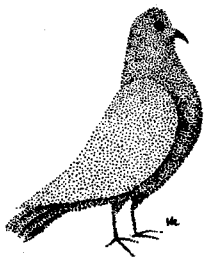
"create a new culture among the people, to disprove the belief that Arab cities are necessarily dirty." It established house-to-house garbage collection and regular street cleaning. It distributed garbage bags. It cleaned vacant lots, until the people themselves began keeping them clean. It planted trees, which are alien to Arab culture, and Amman is now a city not only of trees but of flower gardens and parks. Buildings had to be white, and their height was restricted to take advantage of the sunlight and airiness of the climate. The government built bridges and tunnels, good water and sewer systems, and networks of street lights. "The people, seeing where their money went, willingly paid their taxes," Rawabdeh told me. "It has also mattered that they believed in the regime. King Hussein provided stability, and the people responded."

My first meeting with Queen Noor was in 1983, in a huge living room of the Nadwa Palace, which serves as the family residence. She had been married five years by then, and had three little children—outside the window I could see a small garden, with a swing set and overturned tricycles. This time, we met in the Mawa Palace, in her office, a small room furnished with comfortable couches and an elaborately carved desk, and decorated in the Islamic style, with Koranic calligraphy on the walls. The Queen said that her maternal duties were less consuming with the children in school, but that she and the King almost always joined them for dinner. She was conservatively dressed, in an aqua blouse and a beige skirt, and her long blond hair, brushed straight back, fell halfway to her waist. On every surface of the office there were photographs of the royal couple, sometimes with dignitaries, more often with the children.



The Queen was a trifle upset when I arrived; that day's *International Herald Tribune* carried a column written by her father, Najeeb Halaby, who lives in Washington. Halaby is the son of a Syrian immigrant—the family name means "of Aleppo." He is a graduate of Stanford and Yale Law School, and was the head of the Federal Aviation Administration under President Kennedy and later the chairman of Pan American World Airways. The Queen, who was born Lisa Halaby and brought up in Washington, is deeply devoted to him. She once told me that although she had not been raised with much Arab consciousness, she felt a mystical attachment to her Arab roots. Now, having been a Jordanian for more than a decade, she expressed strong disagreement with her father's somewhat scriptural assertion that "the United States and the West have reacted righteously" to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait by mobilizing "a magnificent coalition against aggression." She questioned how "righteously" the United States and the West had behaved and how "magnificent" the coalition was, and she repeated the Jordanian position that the West, led by the United States, had overreacted to Iraq's incursion by dispatching too many troops too quickly, giving Arab diplomacy no opportunity to find a solution.

"My father, as a first-generation Arab-American, has been dedicated for many years to improving relations between the United States and this part of the world," she said. "He grew up privileged. He was accepted. He enjoyed the best in education and rose very high. He has never denied his Arab roots, but he has never forgotten how much he owes his country. He and I agree that Saddam Hussein acted illegally and immorally in invading Kuwait and holding innocent hostages. But he is so outraged by the aggression that he is incapable of looking behind it, to understand it within its historical context. Maybe you have to be *in* the Arab world—even if you have an Arab background—to understand the sensitivities of the Arabs. Imagine how we, in the palace, feel about the fact that no American officials have been to Jordan since the crisis began. Baker and Cheney have visited the region several times, and neither one has stopped here. Baker went to Syria, and it is still on the international-terrorism list, but he didn't come to Jordan."

The Queen spoke softly, but with greater confidence than she had during our 1983 meeting. Having graduated from Princeton with a degree in architecture and urban planning only four years before her marriage, at the age of twenty-six, to Jordan's leader, she was then going through a process of self-education—about both Jordanian politics and the Arab community. She had changed her name (Noor means "light" in Arabic), had been converted to Islam, and had acquired Arabic, which she now speaks reasonably well. Though wiser and more composed, she has remained unmistakably American in her view of the world.

"I was targeted from the start by those who wanted to get at the King but found me easier to strike," she said. "I was careful: I never made a public statement in disagreement with policy or tried to establish myself as an autonomous political figure. But the Islamic fundamentalists were never comfortable with me, and they questioned my Islamic beliefs. Their printing presses were always running, and, obviously, some of the leaflets hurt. I suppose the Muslim Brothers think they are defending Islamic tradition by attacking me. Though I am far from being a policymaker in this government, I do stand for a certain ideology: openness of the political system, with press conferences and television appearances by the King; a greater role for women; an open door for Western culture; and regular interaction with the rest of the world."

Queen Noor said that the tendency of Americans to judge Arabs in terms of the stereotypes perpetuated by Western media was a self-imposed handicap. For example, she said, Americans had heard for so long that democracy was alien to Arabs that they had not shown the slightest interest in Jordan's new democratic experiment, which placed Jordan at the leading edge of change in the Arab world. "Saddam Hussein reinforces the stereotype, but we can't choose our relatives," she said. "In Jordan, we live with him, so we have to work with him. We wish that he hadn't invaded Kuwait, but we realize that he has helped to focus attention on issues that have needed to be addressed for a very long time. He is a catalyst, and his audacity—if we can call it that—has struck a responsive chord here."

A few days after our meeting, the Queen invited me to join her on a visit to the Azraq camp, where some twenty thousand evacuees from Kuwait—Indians, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, and Filipinos—were at that moment waiting for transportation home. I met the Queen at her office, where a car waited to drive us a few hundred yards to a waiting helicopter. Accompanying

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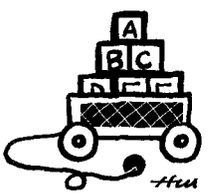
us was Salameh Hammad, the secretary-general of the Ministry of the Interior, who was in charge of overseeing the evacuation. Azraq is about fifty miles east of Amman, on the desert road to Baghdad, and in the course of the half-hour flight the Queen and Hammad reviewed the day's computer printout on the status of evacuees in Jordan. During August and September, some six hundred and fifty thousand foreign workers and dependents, more than half of them Egyptians, had crossed the border from Iraq and left for home, most of them after a stay of only three or four days. A hundred and fifty thousand evacuees who carried Jordanian passports had also entered, and nearly a third of those had gone on to homes in the West Bank, with the rest remaining in Jordan. From the helicopter window I watched the cultivated land on which Amman sits vanish quickly, to be replaced by caramel-colored dunes stretching as far as the eye could see. Finally, Azraq—a tract of square white tents pitched in dozens of straight rows—appeared on the horizon, a kinetic patch on the lifeless landscape.



An honor guard of a few uniformed men stood beside the pad as we settled to the ground. An Army officer approached and saluted, then showed us to a Land Rover parked a few yards away. Noor jumped in behind the wheel and motioned to her guests to take the other seats, and we barrelled off across the trackless desert, followed at a discreet distance by two or three jeeps. The day was hot, but a stiff wind blew, peppering our clothes and hair with sand and making conversation impossible. Occasional gusts blew sand into our eyes. The Queen stopped first at a large tent marked with the insignia of the International Red Cross and its Arab counterpart, the Red Crescent. A receiving line of about twenty doctors, nurses, and medical aides had formed, and she marched along it, shaking each person's hand and dutifully asking questions, usually in English but sometimes in hesitant Arabic. Meanwhile, several hundred Indians—most of them unshaven young men in soiled working clothes—had gathered nearby and were being held at bay by a line of soldiers. To the dismay of the officers, the Queen barged in among them, grasping hands as if she were running for alderman in Chicago. Finally extricating herself, she made for a tent serving as a maternity hospital, where she inquired whether there was enough food and enough water for showering, and promised a search for more blankets, since the nights had begun to turn cold. After about twenty minutes, she climbed back into the Land Rover, and we drove to another part of the camp, where she repeated this routine.

From what I saw at Azraq, Jordan's hospitality to the evacuees appeared to be both generous and well administered, and though the government has picked up a sizable tab—about sixty million dollars to date, according to reliable estimates—Jordan was by no means doing the job alone. Much of the operation was administered and paid for by international agencies, with additional contributions provided by foreign governments. Several of the foreign functionaries complained to me about the King's appointment of Hammad to oversee the program, since his post in the Interior Ministry inevitably suggested *mukhabarat* to them. But Hammad's appointment was not intended to deal with security problems as much as with the possibility that evacuees would slip away from the camps and throw themselves onto an already overcrowded job market—a justifiable concern.

From the first day of the crisis, Jordan's financial experts recognized that the country's economy was in deep trouble. In the best of times, the Jordanian economy has never been very powerful. Only six per cent of Jordan's land is arable, and its only significant natural resources are phosphates and potash from the Dead Sea. In 1978, after Egypt withdrew from the struggle against Israel, the Gulf states agreed to pay Jordan an annual subsidy of one and a quarter billion dollars, in recognition of its services as a buffer between them and the militarily powerful Israelis. But, with the exception of the Saudis, they never paid more than a fraction of what they promised, and in recent years the subsidy has almost entirely disappeared. With its industrious Palestinian population and its excellent education system, Jordan dreamed of becoming "the Singapore of the Middle East"—or, after the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, the new Beirut—but these goals proved

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illusory. The sector in which it excelled was the export of skilled Palestinians, some three hundred thousand of whom went to work in the Gulf, sustaining the civil service and the economy of the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, and the Emirates. Together, these workers sent home more than a billion dollars a year, providing nearly a third of Jordan's total national income. The Gulf crisis is expected to cut these funds at least in half.

Very reluctantly, Jordan agreed to observe the terms of the United Nations embargo. It has made an exception on several occasions for truck caravans of milk and medicines destined for Iraqi children. It has also allowed Iraqi Airways passenger planes to land in Amman, a connection of such all-around usefulness that it probably has the tacit endorsement of the anti-Iraqi alliance. Otherwise, Jordan is generally acknowledged to have been faithful to the embargo, which is expected to cost it two hundred and eighty million dollars a year in exports to Iraq, its principal trading partner. In addition, the annual loss of transit business from the Red Sea port of Aqaba to Iraq is estimated at two hundred and fifty million dollars and the increase in maritime insurance for Jordan's own imports at probably one hundred and twenty million dollars more. The number of tourists is expected to fall by half, creating a drop in annual income of two hundred and thirty million dollars, and the cost of oil imports is expected to rise by a hundred and eighty million dollars—though for the moment Iraq is delivering oil against the repayment of earlier loans. In all, the government predicts annual losses from the crisis in excess of two billion dollars—more than half the G.N.P., and a loss, proportionally, far greater than that predicted for any other country. Recent reports indicate that hunger is already being felt in some segments of Jordan's society, while promises of help from the international community have largely not been kept. A consortium of sixteen wealthy nations has allocated about a billion dollars to Jordan to help offset its losses; about a third of that amount is moving slowly through the pipeline, with Germany and Japan the chief contributors. The United States, as the military arm of the U.N. coalition, is not an economic contributor, but Jordan believes that Washington has discouraged the prompt dispatch of aid from other donors, including the World Bank, to show its displeasure at King Hussein's lack of support for American policy. As for the Saudis and the Kuwaitis—who are part of the consortium but are nonetheless angry with King Hussein—they have made it clear that they are willing to let Jordan starve.

Queen Noor spent about an hour at the Azraq camp before climbing back into the Land Rover for the bumpy ride across the desert to the helicopter. "With each new crisis in the Middle East, the circle of people who suffer expands," she told me, after we were aboard and waiting to get under way. "This is a man-made problem. This suffering is not the result of a natural catastrophe. This crisis did not have to happen. And we, more than any other country, are being asked to pay for it." The Queen closed her eyes for a few minutes after we were airborne, then reviewed with Salameh Hammad some ideas on what she thought ought to be done in the camp. The helicopter landed where it had taken off, on a pad in the palace compound, and Noor got into a waiting car. Feeling rather grubby, I got into another and was driven to the Basman Palace, where a few of the King's advisers had promised to see me after my excursion.

KING HUSSEIN'S advisers tend to be prudent men, and, like the advisers of any head of state, they also have a preference for anonymity. Crown Prince Hassan, the King's forty-three-year-old brother, shares their prudence, but he is willing to talk on the record. Hassan was educated at Oxford; he is intellectually more gifted than the King, but less endowed with political instincts and personal charisma. He is a jovial man, with a self-effacing wit that belies the fierce expression in his dark eyes. Hassan, who serves as the King's closest confidant on domestic and international-security matters, was among the advisers who were willing to discuss with me the King's reaction to the Iraqi invasion, but he was the only one I was free to identify.

It was the Crown Prince who raised with me the question of whether the Gulf crisis might have been the product of collusion—deliberate or inadvertent—between the United States and Kuwait. I have heard many conspiracy theories in my years of travel in the Middle East; there is some evidence—at least, circumstantial—to support this one. Hassan noted that the entire Arab world had found Kuwait's defiant behavior toward Iraq in the months preceding the crisis incomprehensible. Kuwait's overproduction had forced the price of oil far below the OPEC target, with much more damaging con-

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sequences to Iraq than to itself. Kuwait, a country of half a million resident citizens, had huge foreign investments that generated more income than its oil sales; Iraq, by contrast, was a country of eighteen million, deeply in debt from eight years of war with Iran, and drastically short of funds for reconstruction and development. Economists attribute the difference in production strategy to Kuwait's long-term goals of greater worldwide oil consumption and a larger market share, which they compare with Iraq's immediate need for an infusion of cash. But governments do not make provocative economic decisions solely on the basis of market strategy—not when there is such a disparity in power as exists between Iraq and Kuwait. Was there another explanation? During the Iran-Iraq War, a huge excess of pumping by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—both of them supporters of Iraq—brought about a collapse in the price of oil at the very moment when Iran had exhausted its financial reserves. Some experts on the war argue that this move, as much as the victories of the Iraqi Army, forced Iran to its knees. Did Kuwait, perhaps with Saudi acquiescence, attempt to repeat this pattern, with Iraq as its target? If so, was Washington aware?

Those who attach credibility to the collusion theory point out that in early 1990, while Kuwait was increasing production, American anxiety over trends in the Gulf seemed to be intensifying. Analysts predicted that America's oil imports would rise dramatically in the mid-nineteen-nineties, and this would mean a huge increase in the deficit of its balance of payments unless oil prices were kept low. Anti-Iraqi feelings, meanwhile, were fanned by reports of chemical genocide against the Kurds, the attempted construction of a supercannon with a range of hundreds of miles, and efforts to obtain triggering mechanisms for nuclear weapons. The American press made much of the rising Iraqi menace, and this in turn generated demands for the crippling of Iraq's growing military capacity. In Israel, there was talk of imminent war—talk that sounded much like what had been heard in 1981 on the eve of the bombing of Iraq's nuclear facility. Genuinely frightened, Saddam Hussein warned the Israelis in April that he had the capacity to retaliate—this time by devastating half the country with chemical weapons. His statement served only to exacerbate the anti-Iraqi sentiments in America. Addressing an Arab summit in Baghdad in May, King Hussein called attention to an "unholy campaign against Iraq." "We didn't know what it all meant," one royal adviser told me. "We couldn't put together the pieces of the mosaic, but we were suspicious."

Simultaneously, a strategic rivalry seemed to be shaping up in the Gulf. Iraq was proposing to build a naval facility at Umm Qasr, a fishing village on its narrow Gulf coastline to be linked by a deepwater canal to the inland port of Basra. The new harbor, however, would require two nearby uninhabited Kuwaiti islands, Bubiyan and Warba, for its security. Meanwhile, the United States, given the sudden decline in Soviet power, appeared ready to station a major fleet in the Gulf. What was at stake, according to some experts, was control of the Gulf waters, which would largely determine whether Washington or Baghdad exercised preëminence over oil production in the region. Kuwait, because it owned the islands, played an inordinately important role in this shadow struggle. During a series of diplomatic encounters throughout the spring and summer, the Kuwaitis took an extremely hard line with Iraq. The Iraqi position is that Kuwait offered no significant concessions, either on oil-production limits or on control of the islands or on possession of the Rumaila oil fields on Kuwait's northern boundary—a territorial dispute dating back to the colonial era. Moreover, Kuwait continued to ask for repayment, with interest, of loans made to Iraq during the Gulf War—loans that Iraq, on the ground that it had saved Kuwait from Khomeini in the fighting, had assumed would be forgiven. Iraq's response was to demand two and a half billion dollars for oil that it claimed Kuwait had stolen by slant drilling into Iraq's Rumaila fields, across the frontier.

"The Kuwaitis were very cocky," one of King Hussein's advisers told me. "They told us officially that the United States would intervene if there was trouble with Iraq. We don't know where they got that impression—from the United States itself or from another party, like the British or the Saudis. The Kuwaitis said that they knew what they were doing. They seemed

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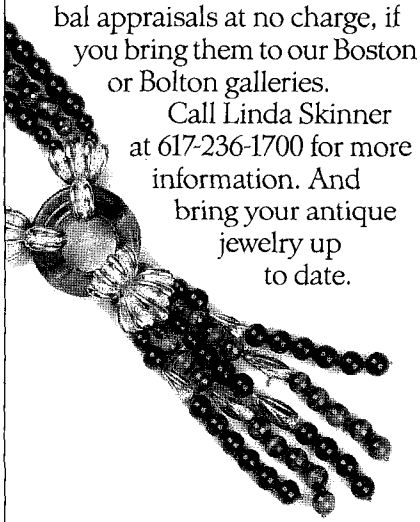

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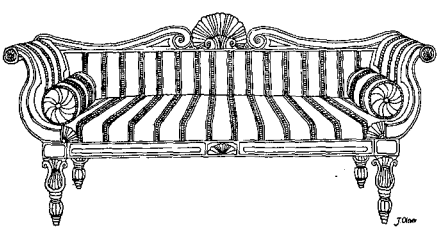
to think they were safe." (At the end of October, the Iraqis made public an internal memorandum that they claimed to have discovered in a Kuwaiti government file. The memorandum described in some detail talks purportedly held late in 1989 between Kuwaiti security officials and William Webster, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. A C.I.A. spokesman said that the assertions it contained—some of which appeared to support Jordanian suspicions of collusion—were "total fabrications and without foundation.")

Last July, its patience wearing thin, Iraq sent thirty thousand troops to the Kuwaiti border to emphasize the seriousness of the crisis, asserting to all who inquired that they would not advance as long as negotiations held some hope of a positive outcome. In Washington, a State Department spokesman declared, "We do not have any defense treaties with Kuwait, and there are no special defense or security commitments to Kuwait . . . [but] we remain strongly committed to supporting the individual and collective self-defense of our friends in the Gulf, with whom we have deep and long-standing ties." The following day, Saddam Hussein summoned the American Ambassador in Baghdad to ask the meaning of this statement. The answer he received was that Iraq's dispute with Kuwait was an Arab, not an American, affair. However Saddam Hussein may have interpreted that assurance, events moved quickly to a dénouement. On August 1st, a final meeting between Iraq and Kuwait in Jidda collapsed. The following day, Iraq invaded.

Prince Hassan told me that King Hussein was awakened at six o'clock on the morning of August 2nd by a phone call from King Fahd, of Saudi Arabia. "Have you heard?" the Saudi King asked. "The Iraqis are within a few kilometres of Kuwait City." King Hussein was said to be dumbstruck, and he has continued to maintain that he was taken completely by surprise, though he had been in regular contact with Saddam Hussein in an effort to mediate the dispute. It is King Hussein's view that the invasion was a last-minute decision, made in anger at the Kuwaiti intransigence in Jidda. But, according to his advisers, what surprised the King even more—at least, in retrospect—was that Fahd did not at that time ask for a total Iraqi withdrawal. Instead, he proposed what seemed like a compromise: that the Iraqis withdraw to the disputed border area—a move that would have left them in possession of the Rumaila oil fields and the two islands. Whether that proposal represented to King Fahd the limit of the possibilities, or was simply the limit of his aspirations, was not clear. What was clear was that he did not at that time express any fear that Saddam Hussein would order his troops into Saudi Arabia. Two days later, King Fahd sent a minister to Amman, who confirmed that Saudi Arabia saw no threat of an Iraqi invasion. When President Bush announced, on August 8th, that he was sending ground troops to defend Saudi Arabia, Iraq issued a statement saying that it had already notified the American Embassy in Baghdad that it never had any intention of entering Saudi territory. To this day, King Hussein and his circle remain convinced that Saddam was telling the truth, and that King Fahd knew it.

After King Hussein ended his wake-up conversation with King Fahd, he placed a call to Baghdad and succeeded in reaching Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz; in the early afternoon, he talked to Saddam Hussein himself. Both men told him that Iraq, having invaded Kuwait to teach it a lesson, planned to withdraw over the weekend. Saddam warned, however, that any public condemnation or threat to Iraq from within the Arab world would complicate the execution of his withdrawal plan, since withdrawal under those circumstances would convey the impression that he was caving in to pressure. By chance, the Islamic Conference Organization was then meeting in Cairo, and late in the morning King Hussein received a report that the Arab ministers at the meeting were organizing to censure Iraq. Recognizing the danger of such a motion to the prospects of a quick solution, the King called President Hosni Mubarak, who was summering in Alexandria, and in the afternoon he and his foreign minister flew there to meet with him. Hussein and



Mubarak placed a call to President Bush, and found him disturbed about the invasion but noncommittal about his plans. They also called King Fahd, who agreed that King Hussein should fly to Baghdad to reassure Saddam. The three heads of state agreed to convene a limited Arab summit—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen, along with Saddam and the Emir of Kuwait—within a few days, to settle the dispute once and for all. With the approval of both Mubarak and King Fahd, and aboard Mubarak's private plane, King Hussein then sent his foreign minister to Cairo to head off the impending censure.

The next day—Friday, August 3rd—King Hussein flew to Baghdad, where Saddam accepted the proposal to attend the summit, which was scheduled for Sunday in Jidda. Kuwait, however, had already gone to the United Nations Security Council and obtained approval of a resolution demanding Iraq's withdrawal, and President Bush had been told by the Pentagon that satellite photographs showed three Iraqi divisions heading for the Saudi border—though C.I.A. radio intercepts did not indicate that they planned to cross it. This information, which left Iraq's intent undeciphered, was shared with Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi Ambassador in Washington, and he presumably conveyed it back home. The President had also announced the dispatch of American warships to the Gulf and a freeze on Iraqi assets. By the time King Hussein returned to Amman—about midnight on the 3rd—the settlement plan was in shambles. Mubarak had publicly denounced Saddam Hussein that afternoon. According to the Jordanians, he explained to the King over the phone, without elaborating, that he was "under tremendous pressure." Later that day, the foreign ministers of the Arab League—with Jordan among six dissenters—condemned the invasion.

When Saddam Hussein learned of the actions of Mubarak and the Arab League, he withdrew his promise to attend the summit, saying that he had been prejudged. On Sunday, President Bush held an impromptu press conference on his return from Camp David—where he had spent the weekend lining up allies—at which he referred to the Iraqis as "international outlaws and renegades." He added, presumably re-

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ferring to King Hussein, "I was told by one leader I respect enormously—I believe this was back on Friday—that they needed forty-eight hours to find what was called an 'Arab solution.' That obviously has failed." But the sequence of events suggests rather strongly that Bush had been instrumental in causing it to fail. Instead of the Arab summit, the Security Council met on Sunday, to consider the American proposal for an embargo on Iraq; it was passed twenty-four hours later. Since then, there has been no turning back from the military confrontation. The King's advisers do not claim to have hard evidence that Bush leaned on Mubarak and King Fahd that weekend, but they certainly believe it. They wonder whether a war aimed at Iraq's destruction—or, at least, at the destruction of its war-making potential—was America's plan all the time. "It seems to us that the position of the Americans has been war, war, war from the very beginning," the Crown Prince told me.

The King has continued to work for an "Arab solution." During the second week of the crisis, he made a visit to Bush in Kennebunkport, which was notably unsuccessful, but mostly he has attempted to build Arab coalitions—particularly with the North African countries—to bring pressure on Saddam Hussein and King Fahd to sit down together. Hassan told me that the King had been consistently thwarted in his efforts. "Every time the King and other leaders say they have a package, the Americans knock it down, maintaining that nothing short of complete and unconditional Iraqi withdrawal is acceptable," he said. "It is as if we were being punished as wogs who don't know their place and have stepped out of bounds."

Americans are "too fickle" for Jordan to rely on, another adviser told me. "We learned in your schools," he said. "You told us that in dealing with Israel we had to learn to compromise, so we did. But now you reject compromise. You have told us since 1967 that we had to accept the principle of a negotiated settlement, and we did. But now you want to solve your problem with Iraq by ultimatum. You told us that we needed to accept more democracy and human rights, and now you are supporting this spendthrift, reactionary, uncultured family that rules Kuwait. Everyone understands that Iraq has to

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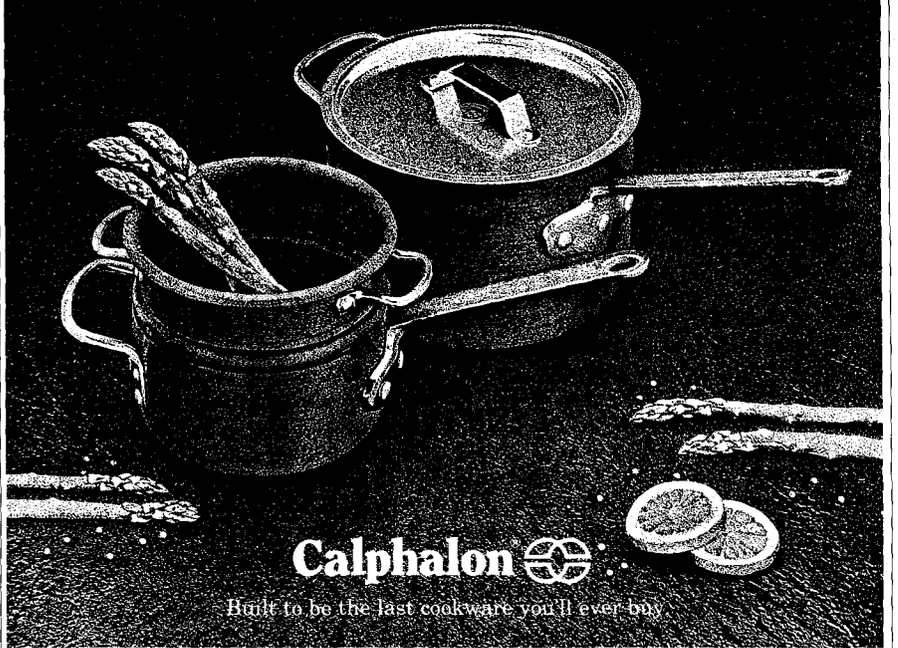

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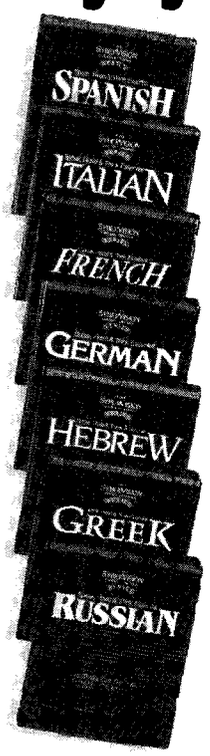

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withdraw. The world needs it, as a precedent. But, in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, America is tying itself to the ugliest image of non-democracy in the world."

Whatever their dismay at Washington's actions, the men around King Hussein save their real wrath for the Saudis. "We feel that the Saudis went beyond the red line in calling the Americans to come in," one of them said to me. "At the grass-roots level, long-submerged feelings of resentment on the part of most Arabs toward the Saudis are now out of the bottle. We resent the fact that they buy everything —technology, protection, ideas, people, respectability. Most Arabs now say that Saudi Arabia has disappeared and America alone is running things in the Gulf. They see Bush on television almost every day, but they almost never see King Fahd. For years, the Arabs have resented America's unlimited support of Israel. Now they are saying that the United States and Saudi Arabia are indistinguishable, and from this they conclude that the Saudis are backing Israel. Have the Saudis no shame? The Saudi monarchy, when this crisis is over, will find it very difficult to shake that association."

KING HUSSEIN IBN TALAL, by family reckoning, is in the thirty-eighth generation of descent from the Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam. The family's roots lie in the Hejaz, a rugged strip of mountain and desert along the Red Sea coast of the Arabian peninsula. Muhammad was a member of the tribe of Quraysh, which controlled the caravan trade through the Hejaz; his family was the House of Hashem, the descendants of which are called Hashemites today. From the thirteenth century, the Hashemites were the kings of Hejaz and the guardians of the sites sanctified by Muhammad. They played this role until 1924, when the Saud family, consolidating its control over the peninsula, drove them out and took over the guardianship of the holy shrines.

In the First World War, King Hussein's great-grandfather, Sharif Hussein of Mecca, led the dramatic Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire, and thus became the symbol of renascent Arab identity and the sire of Arab nationalism. For his contribution to the victory of the Allies, he was promised the leadership of a united Arab nation, but when the Ottoman possessions were divided up, the European powers took command of the region. Under the British, Abdullah, a son of Sharif Hussein, was named the Emir of Transjordan, and Faisal, another son, became the King of Syria, and, later, the King of Iraq. Sharif Hussein, having refused to accept the Allies' postwar arrangements, wound up living in exile in Cyprus, under British superintendence. As Emir, Abdullah fought intermittently with the Sauds on the Jordan-Saudi border and did not formally make his peace with them until 1948.

Transjordan won its independence from Britain after the Second World War, and Abdullah took the title of King. In the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, he alone among the Arabs emerged a victor—politically, if not militarily—having enlarged his realm by seizing the West Bank of the Jordan River. In the aftermath, Abdullah, seeing himself as the heir to the leadership of the Arab nation, placed a higher priority on uniting Jordan with Syria and Iraq than on resuming the struggle with Israel. This order of priorities led to his assassination, in 1951, as he entered the Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. Hussein, Abdullah's grandson, became Jordan's king at the age of seventeen, after a one-year interval during which his father, who suffered from schizophrenia, held the throne. He has been in office for thirty-eight years—far longer than any other Arab leader. It was only under Hussein that the notion of a Jordanian, as opposed to an Arab, nation grew—though the Hashemite vision of an Arab nation has never died.

I once asked King Hussein how it felt to be a descendant of the Prophet, with the religious and political weight of centuries upon his shoulders. He is an exquisitely polite man, but a trifle distant—perhaps consciously regal. As befits someone schooled at Harrow and Sandhurst, he speaks excellent English, even if his phrasing is somewhat foreign. Though his voice is deep and resonant, he spoke so softly that I was afraid my tape recorder would not pick up the words. Even now, as I review his replies to my questions, I see threaded through them a melancholy that seems to be his constant companion. "We are a family that has been a part of the Arab struggle throughout its history," he answered. "We have a position, and a responsibility, regardless of the demands of the day. But in terms of our role, what we have experienced is that the dreams and hopes are far greater than the realities, which are very, very distressing—and have been throughout our history. My concept of my role is that I am a Hashemite and a proud servant of the people. Throughout my years of responsibility, I have not thought that Arab unity could be achieved through the old approach, linked to a single individual or family. For me, all that remains is to try to leave behind greater security, greater stability, greater continuity. All Arab leaders must do whatever they can do to insure a better future. But my challenge is that I live up to all that my family has done."

Knowing that his father had been ill through most of his childhood and that the dominant influence in his life was King Abdullah, who groomed him for the succession, I asked King Hussein to describe the relationship between grandfather and boy.

"Toward the end of his life I had the privilege of being with him, being very close to him, practically all the hours of every day," he said. "To me he was a father—the father, probably, that I didn't have as much as one would normally have a father. He suffered so many setbacks in his life. The whole Arab revolt was for the defense of Arab identity—to secure Arab freedom and Arab unity. To see the Arab world occupied, to see it divided, was a very great shock to his hopes. The abandonment by the Allies of their commitment to the Arab cause was unethical. But all of that never affected his determination to serve his people honestly. He was a good man, and he represented goodness to me."

I asked the King what he had learned from his grandfather about dealing with Israel.

"I believe that accommodation was his objective," he said. "That was his advice to the Arabs during the period that preceded the partition plan [of

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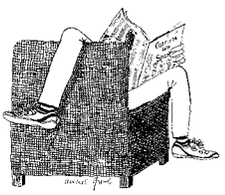
1947]. If there had been some way of putting together an equation that would last—which people on both sides felt they could live with—he would have tried his best to achieve it. That has been exactly my approach as well. It is a problem that we Arabs are being held to account for the many tragic things that befell the people of the Jewish faith in Europe, though we and the Jews lived together for generations in this area in calm. This is a problem that my grandfather experienced before me, and that I, too, must live with."

The early decades of King Hussein's reign were tumultuous. The nineteen-fifties marked the rise of Nasser and of radical nationalism throughout the Arab world, the King's formal break with his British patrons, the local reverberations from the bloody military overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq, the short-lived union of Egypt and Syria, and a series of failed coups directed at his own regime. The sixties were hardly better, with the founding of the P.L.O. and a campaign of terrorism and reprisal on the Israeli border, followed by the catastrophic defeat in the Six-Day War and Jordan's loss of the West Bank. The war, according to many Western critics, was a blunder for the King, who could have remained neutral. "I knew exactly what the price would be, but we had to honor our commitment to our Arab allies," the King said, when I asked why he decided to fight. "If we had not entered the war, our country would have broken in half—Jordanian against Palestinian—and our Army would have broken up, too. The Israelis would have found an excuse to move into the West Bank in any event, but I would have been portrayed as a traitor. I had already been accused of this, over the years, for counselling caution."



The King has spent the two decades since the Six-Day War trying to undo its outcome. Egypt alone has succeeded in this regard; in 1977, President Anwar Sadat went to Jerusalem, and came away with a peace agreement in which he regained his lost territories but forfeited his honor among Arabs. In the mid-eighties, King Hussein also tried making peace, serving as broker in triangular talks with the P.L.O. and Israel, but his efforts bore no fruit, and on July 31, 1988, totally frustrated, he renounced any further claim to the West Bank. Meanwhile, the war between Iraq and Iran had divided the Arab world even further, with Syria supporting the Khomeini government. The King gave his full support to Iraq, out of a belief in Arab solidarity, forging a collaboration that to this day remains central to his position in the region.

On my visit last fall, I saw the King in his business quarters in the Basman Palace. The halls are patrolled by the King's ceremonial Circassian guards, who wear black uniforms with silver trim, high black boots, fur hats, and silver daggers in their belts. Waiting in a dingy anteroom, I cast my eye on a photograph hanging on the wall. It marked the King's first trip to the United States, in 1959, and showed two men, both wearing the voluminous overcoats that were then the fashion, walking past a guard of honor. One was a frail-looking youth with an expression of delight on his face; the other was the Vice-President, in his forties and nearly a head taller. The photograph was signed "With admiration for his magnificent courage and with appreciation for the leadership he has given the free world—Richard Nixon." There was some irony in the inscription, I thought, given the current alliance of the "free world" with the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, and the Syrians. After a few minutes, I was ushered into a small, undistinguished office, where the King sat alone behind a desk, smoking a cigarette. He was heavier, grayer, more sombre, but no less courteous than I remembered him.

"Iraq emerged from eight years of war a new phenomenon in the region, but it was unable to gauge the mood of the world," the King said. "In Kuwait, it acted in a way that caused others, particularly the Saudis, to panic. I had been to Kuwait. I begged the Kuwaitis to be conciliatory, but I came back with an uncomfortable feeling. The Saudis didn't think there was any crisis, and then, after the Jidda meeting, on which everything depended, the Iraqis overreacted. We raced to try to slow the situation down, and I think a solution was almost within our grasp in the first days. But in the atmosphere of suspicion that existed in the region, the Saudis and the other Gulf states quickly seized on the opportunity for foreign

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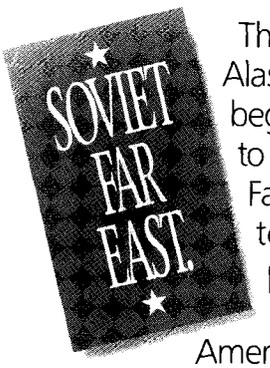

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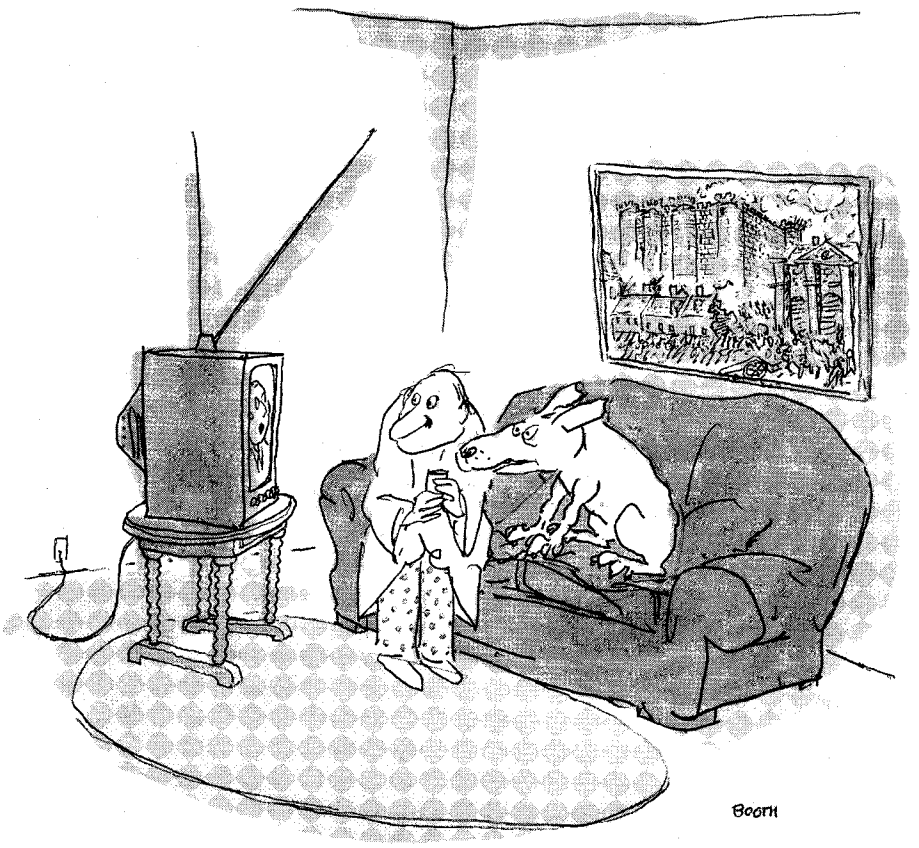

"Let me talk to you a few moments about holding on to your lover, your hair, your money, your dog. . . ."

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intervention. I can't understand the attitude of the Egyptians, whom I helped to return to the Arab fold after the Camp David agreement. They have fanned the fires. Mubarak is poisoning his reputation in the Arab world. At Kennebunkport, I sought assurance from President Bush that he would not act militarily, but he is being influenced to take this intransigent line. I don't know if it's the Saudis who are influencing him, but we in this region have fallen into a trap, and we are dashing toward a disaster of the greatest magnitude."

I had the feeling that in spite of his baleful observations the King's morale was higher than it had been at our last meeting, when the Iran-Iraq War seemed stalemated, when the peace process with Israel had bogged down, when the problems of the region seemed only to linger. He is a man of action, who likes to get out-of-doors, bivouac with the troops, fly a plane, race a car. The Gulf crisis has roused him, and he is excited by having a role to play that gives him a measure of control over the outcome. Inevitably, the King sees the confrontation in the Gulf within the framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has dominated his reign—indeed, his life. He argues to any Westerner who will listen that Arabs can hardly be enthusiastic about Security Council Resolution 660, which requires Iraq to quit Kuwait immediately, when Security Council Resolution 242, which requires Israel to evacuate the occupied territories, has been on the books, unenforced, for twenty-three years. He points out that Israel—some of whose officials refer to Jordan as "a Palestinian state"—might well seize upon an inter-Arab war as a pretext for invading his country. He understands that the frustration Arabs feel about American indifference to their interests has a bearing on the crisis: any settlement imposed by outsiders—outsiders known to be friends of Israel—is in his view unlikely to last.

"There is so much talk about a new world order," he said. "I do not think its meaning is that we Arabs must do exactly what the Great Powers say. We cannot waste time with more wars in this region—we have too many things to do. Many borders that were left to us by the colonial powers may have to be reëxamined. We have to reduce the gaps between the haves and the have-nots, by embarking on a meaningful development plan beneficial to all. We must bring more democracy and more concern for human rights to the region. Remember that my whole family in Baghdad was wiped out by these people in 1958. But I don't look back. I came to power when Truman was President. I'm not here for four years, or eight years, like your leaders. I'm in this office for the long haul, and I can't forget that I'm an Arab and a Hashemite. Grim as this crisis is, something positive can come out of it. The germs of a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict are contained in it, I believe. If we can restore stability, then we can resolve the oil problem to the satisfaction of the industrial powers. More than that, I think we can even get to the issue of arms control in the region—nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, even missiles—if we put both Arab and Israeli arms on the table. I believe that Saddam will honor any agreement he makes. He has never told me anything that he hasn't stuck by. I don't know what will happen to Jordan if there's war. We'll try to stay out of it. But war can't possibly be to the advantage of the United States or anyone else—not even Israel. We can't foresee what will happen once a war starts. The fundamentalists say that the holy shrines have never been more threatened. The nationalists say that we must battle against this resurrection of colonialism. Will the Arab world even survive? I'm not sure I know. I'll continue to play my role, whatever intimidation I face from inside or outside the region. I will fulfill my responsibility."

KING HUSSEIN had something of a scare from inside his own country two years ago, and in reacting positively he transformed, and perhaps saved, his regime. After prosperity in the Gulf declined with the fall of oil prices in the early eighties, Jordan turned to the International Monetary Fund for help, and was told to institute belt-tightening reforms. King Hussein happened to be visiting the United States when his government, in April of 1989, announced a major increase in the price of gasoline and other basic commodities. Within forty-eight hours, crowds were rioting in the streets of Maan, a southern city populated mostly by Bed-

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ouin tribesmen, and over the ensuing days at least eight people were killed and more than fifty injured. The King had good reason to take seriously an uprising in Maan, since the region had always been regarded as the bedrock of Hashemite support. Abdullah kept the Bedouins' allegiance by dispensing government jobs and Army posts to them. King Hussein has perpetuated this patronage system, and the Bedouin have always stood by him, a counterweight to the divided loyalties of the Palestinians. Though nomadic life has long since vanished in the region, the half of the King's subjects who call themselves Jordanian, as opposed to Palestinian, continue to identify with their tribes, hold on to some of their old ways, and vow their fealty to the King.

In Maan, the transition to modern living turned several thousand nomads into truck drivers, a large proportion of whom are owners of their trucks. During the Iran-Iraq War, they enjoyed substantial earnings carrying food and arms from Aqaba across the desert to Iraq. Even with the war over, they continued to do well with long hauls to the Gulf, and when the government announced the increase in the price of gasoline, without permitting a commensurate increase in transit fees, they blew up. The target of their wrath, characteristically, was not King Hussein but his Prime Minister, Zaid Rifai, whose resignation they demanded. Within a few days of the first demonstrations, the truckers were joined by community leaders throughout the region, and the message they delivered was a protest not just against economic inequities but against authoritarianism in the conduct of the government. "Down with Rifai!" the crowds shouted, but it was understood that behind Rifai stood the inviolable person of the King.

In Hussein's absence, Prince Hassan flew to Maan and offered to receive a delegation of protesters at the office of the provincial governor. Because the protesters perceived the governor to be hostile, they asked to meet instead at a local mosque, but the Crown Prince, on the advice of his bodyguards, refused to go there. Even now, that decision is debated in Jordan; many say that King Hussein, a notably brave man, would not have refused. When the meeting was cancelled, protesters stoned the Crown Prince's car and engaged in some sporadic looting and burning. Though Prince Hassan tried to impose restraints on the security forces, they reacted violently against the crowds and arrested a number of local political leaders. According to a widely accepted account, when the King learned what had happened he phoned Hassan from Washington and admonished him severely, then boarded his plane to return to Amman. Without delay, he dismissed Rifai, who was an old friend of his but had never been liked by the people, and pledged to turn his attention immediately to satisfying the protesters' grievances. Over the succeeding weeks, he lifted a range of restrictions on the press, released those arrested in connection with the riots, and promised to limit the use of martial law, which had been in effect since the late sixties. He also announced that parliamentary elections would be held by the end of the year.

Jordanians, familiar with the propensity of Arab governments to rig elections, were not totally convinced by the King's vow. Given his unhappy experiences with elected parliaments in the fifties and sixties, when they played a disruptive political role, it seemed worthwhile to ask why he had now chosen such a course. In his public statements, he said little beyond noting that he felt the time had come to unite Jordanians—not only against internal division but against the threat of Israel—through the democratic process. Some speculated that Queen Noor had had some influence in the decision. It was only after the election was over that the King said, with evident satisfaction, that he wanted Jordanian democracy to serve as a monument to Hashemite rule and as a model for the entire region.

Although parties, as such, remained banned, and gerrymandering gave a modest advantage to the Bedouin tribesmen of the south, the election—to the surprise of many—was for the most part honest. Candidates ran as independents, except for the Muslim Brothers, a religious organization that suddenly took on the attributes of a party and ran the best campaign. All the contenders vowed their support of multiparty democracy, human rights, and the King. On other issues, they debated fiercely, before enthusiastic audiences in clubs, theatres, and homes. Wom-

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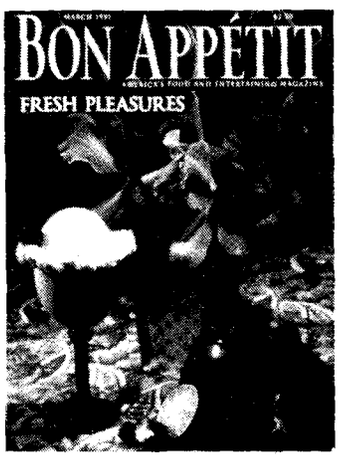

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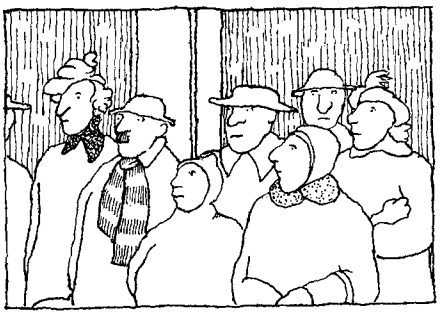
en were as active as men (though only a few ran for office), and the press covered the proceedings accurately and commented with vigor.

King Hussein played no role in the campaign, though near the end he made some elliptical criticism of religious extremism which was interpreted as opposition to the Brotherhood. Ironically, he himself had given the Brotherhood its edge, by relying on it over the years to offset the power of the Baathis, the Communists, and others of the left who were allied with radical Arab movements outside the country. The Brothers elected twenty of their members and a dozen independent fundamentalists besides, thus forming the parliament's largest organized caucus. The left won only a dozen seats (or as few as eight, depending on definition). A majority of the seats went to the independent centrists, but it was not clear whether they held enough views in common to keep the power of the Brotherhood at bay. The King made no secret of his displeasure at the preeminence that the Brotherhood had achieved. In an interview shortly after the voting, he said that the division of Jordan along religious lines was "something I shall never permit as long as I live." The Brotherhood had campaigned in favor of banning alcohol and usury, Islamizing the education and tax systems, promoting Islamic dress, and restricting women to employment in places where they would not routinely encounter men. It has made no effort so far to enact its program, but its secular opponents warn that it is only waiting for the right moment.

One of the losers in the election was Toujan Faisal, a beautiful, long-haired woman of forty-one. She told me an incredible story, which I was later able to confirm in detail. Faisal, a graduate in English literature from the University of Jordan, was an announcer on the national television station in 1988, when her editor assigned her to a new beat, covering women's affairs, a subject with which she had long been deeply concerned. She became the hostess of "Women's Issues," a series that each week considered a different problem of special interest to women. "It turned out to be the most controversial series in the history of Jordanian television," she told me. The broadcast that stirred up the most frenzy dealt with the physical abuse suffered by women in every stratum of society. "The fundamentalists tried to have that particular program banned before it went on the air," she said. "Afterward, the local newspapers received hundreds of letters of protest from outraged men. The letters were unbelievably sadistic. They maintained that it was a God-given right for men to beat women, and that my program was challenging God's order."

Faisal, a Circassian, was born into a family of lawyers and judges; her husband is a gynecologist. She explained to me that the Muslim woman is kept powerless by her total economic dependency. Her husband often confiscates her property and sometimes her income. He can keep three or four wives, and divorce and remarry at will. The divorced wife can be thrown out of her house, be left destitute, and even be deprived of her children. No woman is safe, not at any social rank; husbands take and dispose of wives as they move up the economic ladder. In response to these injustices, she said, she had become a student of the Koran and had learned that such behavior was nowhere authorized in the scriptures. It was, rather, a tradition established by men in the interests of men. "I rebutted the fundamentalists within the context of Islam," she said. "I quoted directly from the Koran and the sayings of the Prophet. What these men have created is a distortion, but the fundamentalists said that I was a heretic, and that I wanted four husbands for myself."

After almost a year of denunciations and threats by religious fanatics, the Ministry of Information took the program off the air. It was at that point that Faisal filed as a candidate to run for a seat in the parliament. She and her husband raised about two thousand dollars, almost half of which went for filing fees, and placed newspaper advertisements announcing her candidacy. She was deluged with offers of help. She campaigned on, among other things, a proposal to amend Jordanian family law to give women greater rights, which, she said, so infuriated the fanatics that they brought charges of apostasy against her in a religious court. The penalties for conviction included dissolution of her marriage and separation from her children. In the fashion of Khomeini's condemnation of Salman Rushdie, her accusers called for the lifting of punishment from any Muslim who might choose to assassinate her—the equivalent of an extra-legal death sentence. The first judge to hear the case threw it out, but the fundamentalists shopped around and found a judge who was willing to rehear the charges. The result was a series of pre-trial hearings—in the course of which the police had to protect her from screaming zealots—which ended when the court disclaimed jurisdiction. During all this, Faisal said, she campaigned under the protection of volunteer bodyguards, while her husband (who ultimately had to close his clinic) and other members of her family were constantly subjected to harassment and intimidation.



Just before election day, she said, a delegation of secular-minded intellectuals called on King Hussein to protest her treatment. The King had always favored women's rights, she said, and was personally responsible for the adoption of woman suffrage in 1973, but he was unaware of the turmoil around her, which the press, intimidated by the fundamentalists, had largely ignored. When he learned of it, he was deeply upset, and in response made his election-eve statement criticizing religious extremism. But even he—to say nothing of the Queen, whose hands are tied on Islamic issues—was not powerful enough to confront the fundamentalists head on. Faisal came in third among six candidates for the seat she was contesting. She insisted to me—and others confirmed—that she was deprived of many votes by electoral fraud, and, in fact, her district was the only one in Jordan where the results were not announced until the next day, and one of only two where there was evidence of serious irregularities.

Since the election, the fundamentalists' war against Faisal has not let up. They succeeded in having her case reheard before an appeals court, which acquitted her. However, fundamentalist leaders have continued to denounce her as a heretic from the pulpits of their mosques. Some of the imams are still

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advocating the death sentence. "They do not forgive," Faisal said, "though I suppose that if I agreed to give up politics permanently they would leave me alone." Unable to find work, she is bringing up her children alone, in an apartment in an Amman suburb, which is where I talked with her. Her husband is now working abroad. She remains active in various women's-rights groups, and she seems resigned to unemployment, unless some international agency with an office in Amman offers her a post. Unfortunately, she said, it seemed unlikely that her candidacy would set a precedent for other women. She predicted that the abuse she suffered would discourage women for a long time from running for office. "I don't think that even the human-rights community in the West has noticed," she said. "But I believe I am fighting for human rights. In an Islamic country like ours, that often comes down to fighting for the rights of women."

DISCOURAGING as Toujan Faisal's experience was, Jordanians acknowledge that since the incident at Maan the government's handling of human rights—apart from the area of family law—has kept pace with its encouragement of democracy. Even in the worst times, it should be noted, Jordan's repression was not on the scale of Syria's or Iraq's. In times of stress, it is believed, King Hussein turned a blind eye to the excesses of the *mukhabarat*, but he has never promoted the climate of fear that has been policy under the regimes of Hafez Assad and Saddam Hussein. According to international human-rights organizations, the *mukhabarat* has held prisoners without trial and has often tortured them. But it has not killed, and its most common instrument of control has been the denial of passports to Jordanians who seemed likely to make trouble abroad. At its worst, the *mukhabarat* has conducted its affairs with a heavy hand while, over all, Jordan has remained a country ruled by law. But in the past year, it is readily agreed, the hand of the *mukhabarat* has grown noticeably lighter.

"We used to have about a hundred and fifty persons a year who were prosecuted for speech violations," I was told by Asma Khader, one of about a dozen lawyers in Amman who specialize in human-rights cases. "But since democratization we have had only a

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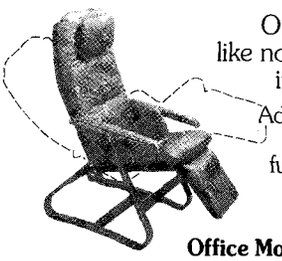

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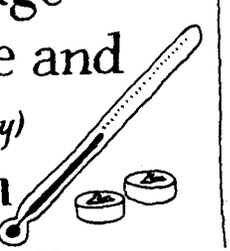

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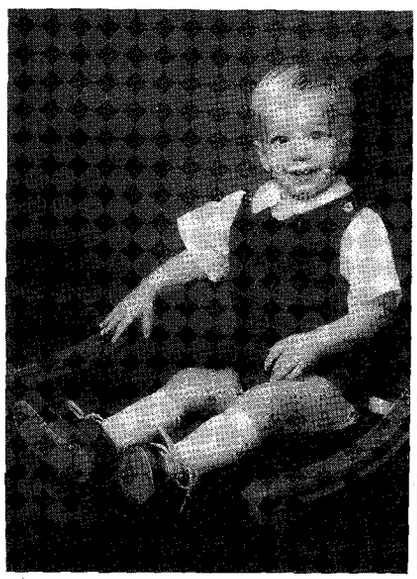

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handful. Martial law has not yet been officially lifted, but it is rarely invoked. The *mukhabarat* is still tough on those Palestinians who are tied to the P.L.O. It treats Communists, at all times, very arbitrarily. Recently, it has concentrated on controlling the violent factions in the Brotherhood, but the universities remain the worst places, because anyone speaking out of turn may be arrested, and anyone arrested can spend up to seven years in the *mukhabarat* prison, usually without being taken to court. I try to defend such people, but I've rarely had any success. Lawyers are never allowed to talk with *mukhabarat* officials. Still, King Hussein has lately become supportive of human rights. In the past, he was above the struggle. Now he encourages organizations for human rights. We have established groups that are affiliated with Amnesty International, Middle East Watch, the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, and some new Arab human-rights organizations. The bar association has a human-rights committee, and so have many of the other professional associations. The journalists are particularly active, but all Jordanians have become conscious of human rights, and they are acquiring the courage to go to the court when they see these rights abridged. Not long ago, Amnesty International published a report on abuses in Jordan. The *mukhabarat* acknowledged some of the points that it made, and the newspapers published comprehensive stories about it. That's a sign that since Maan things really have changed."

Within a month of the 1989 election, several hundred confiscated passports were returned, and applications for passports were being taken from Jordanians who had previously been denied them. Meanwhile, deliberations by leaders across the political spectrum were proceeding on the writing of a "national charter," which the King had requested, to define the role of religion, human rights, and political parties in the state. During my visit, at the opening of the second parliamentary session, the King announced that martial law had been "frozen in preparation for its eventual cancellation," and he reported that the government had "freed all political detainees, reëmployed civil servants who had lost their jobs because of their political affiliations, and safeguarded the freedoms of work, travel, and movement." He noted that media credibility had risen, and that "the press has assumed its role in a positive climate of freedom and sense of responsibility." Few Jordanians seemed prepared to dispute his statements.

The enthusiasm with which King Hussein has given himself to democratization suggests strongly that he believes he is leaving behind him something worthy of the Hashemites. That his program has so far worked successfully is surely due to several factors, not the least of them that the Jordanians of today—in large measure educated, travelled, sophisticated, and middle class—bear little resemblance to the Jordanians of the nineteen-fifties, when democracy and human rights were at their nadir. But the King, paradoxically, has also benefitted from the Gulf crisis, which has unified the population around opposition to foreign (i.e., American) military intervention in the region. "The crisis has given breathing space to Jordanian democracy," Queen Noor said to me, rather offhandedly. "The people are rallying around the King as never before. There is a real sense of family now." The crisis has also meant that the Saudis, who made quite clear that they oppose democratization as a model for the region, have cut themselves off from their usual meddling in Jordan's affairs. "The success of Jordan's experiment will have an influence on many of the countries bordering Jordan," Saad-al-Din Ibrahim, a well-known sociologist at the American University of Cairo, wrote recently, in the Jordan *Times*. "Anything that happens in an Arab country has a chain effect in the region." Ibrahim predicted that the nineteen-nineties would be "the decade of democratization in the Arab world."

The King, of course, could conceivably change direction, as he has done from time to time in the past. But most Jordanians are convinced that the country is irrevocably committed to giving the people a real share in government. Only a war that decimates the society, they say, can force Jordan from its current course. Unfortunately, they point out, such a war seems to be on the horizon.

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MUSICAL EVENTS

Moving Spirits

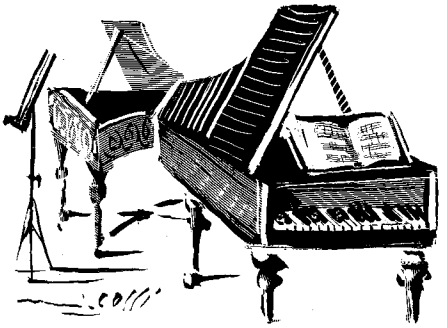
FOR seven seasons, the New York Youth Symphony has at each of its concerts played a new big-orchestra work commissioned from a young composer. Michael Torke, Kamran Ince, Ronald Caltabiano, Scott Eyerly, David Lang, James Primosch, and Aaron Jay Kernis are among those who were thus introduced to a large audience. The latest (and nineteenth) work in the series, Carolyn Yarnell's "Halcyon," was played in Carnegie Hall in December. The halcyon, a kind of kingfisher, nests on the waters and, so the ancients believed, has the power to calm them, to bring "halcyon days." In a program note Yarnell described her work as "a psychological portrait of what I imagine the Halcyon to be: an expansive, majestic bird possessing great beauty and compassion, yet a predator, capable of extreme aggression and violence." Her piece seemed to me more picturesque than psychological—a ten-minute sea picture in which a very large orchestra is employed with skill and beauty. It opens with long, deep, complicated chords, subtly shifting. Currents stir, the surface changes from sparkle to squall (there are striking pages of wild woodwind activity), and a climax is reached. Then calm—but a different, more luminous calm—returns. Yarnell has long harmonic reach and a remarkable ear: the instrumental lines are lively; the profusion of detail does not blur. Once again, the Youth Symphony has brought forward a composer to watch for. Samuel Wong, its music director, conducted a colorful, controlled performance.

The concert began with Mendelssohn's lovable "Fair Melusine" overture, a successor to the "Hebrides" and "Midsummer Night's Dream" overtures. After its composition, the composer's father urged him to abandon elfin subjects and to tackle graver matter; but Tovey calls the "Melusine" overture "very perfect and distinguished and incomparably more serious than any of Mendelssohn's later efforts to follow his father's deplorable advice." The performance began well, with rippling clarinets, and it continued well, in a warm, elegant execution that was shaped with grace by Anthony Aibel, the assistant conductor of the orchestra.

Bruckner's Fourth Symphony, conducted by Mr. Wong, completed the program. It was spaciously laid out and moved surely. I always like Mr. Wong's work—in Beethoven, Berlioz, whatever. (He came to the Youth Symphony two years ago.) It is sensitive, perceptive, unshowy but never unarresting. The prowess of his young players is something one now takes almost for granted. Their fresh, unforced tones waken fresh responses to even the most familiar works.

A FEW days later, Mr. Wong, who is also the assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic, made his Fisher Hall début with that orchestra. The big work on the program was Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, which was to have been conducted by Leonard Bernstein. Mr. Wong's reading was very different from one that Bernstein recorded with the Philharmonic—less frankly passionate, less rhetorical. It could even be called "plain" were that not an odd word for music of so high an emotional charge. And it was interesting. The Fifth Symphony, the composer's "practical, creative reply to just criticism," is ranked high among his achievements. It appeared in 1937, the year after the notorious *Pravda* attack on him, "Confusion Instead of Music," and the withdrawal of the Fourth Symphony when it was already in rehearsal. Both in Russia and, soon thereafter, in the West, the Fifth Symphony was acclaimed. Not all the criticism that prompted it had been *un*just; the composer seemed to acknowledge as much when, shortly before his death, he said of its predecessor, "There were too many imperfect, ostentatious elements in it, the shape was wrong, the construction shallow." In the Fifth, structural puzzles raised by that ambitious Fourth—Shostakovich's first venture into pure symphony since his student days—are effortlessly solved; Tchaikovsky and Mahler are reconciled. In Mr. Wong's performance, the easy yet individual formal mastery shone clear. Any "message" was harder to hear. "Testimony," that disputed volume of Shostakovich memoirs, tells us that the apparent triumph of the finale should have a hollow ring: "The rejoicing is forced, created under threat, as in 'Boris Godunov.' " It did not sound so when Mravinsky or Bernstein conducted the symphony. But throughout the work, not only in the finale, there are passages that can make one ask whether the composer is being serious or sardonic. (There are many such passages in Shostakovich.) Mr. Wong did not try to resolve the ambiguities. He simply presented them, accurately, and listeners were newly challenged. The orchestra responded to his clear beat with excellent playing.

The program began with Schnittke's "(K)ein Sommernachtstraum," an essay at subjecting a tinkling rococo-pastiche little minuet to some modern big-orchestra procedures in a let's-see-what-happens spirit. Then Rachmaninoff's Paganini Variations, Vladimir Feltsman the soloist. His tone was warmer, his phrasing less steely than I expected, but it was an efficient rather than a romantic account of the work.



IN Alice Tully Hall, the Juilliard Symphony, conducted by Paul Zukofsky, gave another arresting and unconventional account of a much played modern symphony: Messiaen's "Turangalîla." (Bernstein conducted the première, with the Boston Symphony, forty-one years ago.) It is a lush, self-indulgent, repetitious eighty-minute composition, fired by genius. Messiaen called it "a hymn to joy . . . not bourgeois, tranquilly euphoric joy . . . joy that is superhuman, boundless, blinding, beyond all measure." At its European première (at the 1950 Aix festival, conducted by Désormière), it seemed splendid but also somewhat absurd; legend says it took two decades or more for the greatness of the excessive "Turangalîla" to become apparent to all. From my score there falls a sheaf of cuttings. Nicholas Kenyon, reviewing

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CONFERENCE CALL

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a 1975 London performance conducted by André Previn, says of the work, "It was dismissed and reviled at its first performance in this country with a rare unanimity. . . . Only recently has it become respectable." But eight and seven years earlier, at Oxford and London performances conducted by Charles Bruck, I had succumbed heart and soul to "Turangalîla"—along with, it seemed, everyone else in the audiences. The truth is that from the start "Turangalîla" has inspired mixed feelings, admiration mingled with reservations, and response has varied from performance to performance. In a 1965 essay the composer David Matthews calls the work "in many ways . . . the true heir of 'Le Sacre' " but also comments on the "short phrase of unfortunate banality" on which the fifth movement, "Joie du Sang des Étoiles," is built, and the "saccharine voluptuousness" of the recurrent love theme.

The Juilliard performance did not inspire heart-and-soul surrender. Potently, it focussed attention on the strength of the construction. Its particularity derived from Mr. Zukofsky's injunction to his instrumentalists to play non-vibrato. Almost all of them obeyed: there were three waggling left hands among the violin ranks, but otherwise the string sections held firm. The miscreants caught the eye but did not disturb the general straightness and steadiness of orchestral sound. Whether Messiaen wants "Turangalîla" to be played straight and steady is another matter; I imagine that he wants the love moments to be boundlessly vibrant, throbbing. The Ondes Martenot did throb—wobbled away like mad—under the finger of Jean Laurendeau, a Canadian player. And, horrid instrument, it sounded far too loud as with electronic force it added a deep rattle to the music, fired whistling rockets above it, or, quivering, screamed out the love theme through the steady song of the fiddles. But the performance as a whole was strong, clear, and exciting.

THE Absolut Vodka concerts in Fisher Hall seem on the face of things to be admirable. New orchestral works are commissioned and performed. This year, the proceeds went to the Manhattan School of Music, where a prize and a renovated practice room were named for Michel Roux, the head of the firm that imports the Swedish spirit. But M. Roux's musical advisers seem committed, in the main, to an unadventurous sort of music. Absolut is strong stuff, 80 proof; Absolut music has so far been mostly watery. The works commissioned for the Absolut concert in November were by Christopher Rouse, Samuel Zyman, and Morton Gould. Rouse's "Concerto per Corde," a recomposition of his Second String Quartet, began with a promising Shostakovichy theme but then churned on and on until it settled into a soupy, sub-Strauss coda. Zyman's Cello Concerto and Gould's Diversions for tenor sax and orchestra went in one ear and out the other. The fourth work on the program was a New York première: Ned Rorem's orchestral song cycle "The Schuyler Songs," composed three years ago for Phyllis Bryn-Julson to sing with the Fargo-Moorhead Symphony. It has attractive melodies, but scarcely a line of James Schuyler's verses, sung by Lucy Shelton, was intelligible. Catherine Comet conducted the American Symphony; the results tended to be blunt, not fine.

THERE was more Messiaen up at the Miller Theatre, where the British pianist Peter Hill, who is recording all Messiaen's piano music for Unicorn-Kanchana, played Book VII (the Buzzard, the Black Wheatear, the Curlew) of the "Bird Catalogue," in a manner less glittering and more lyrical than that of Yvonne Loriod. This music wears well. Mr. Hill is a thoughtful, satisfactory, even poetic pianist, but not one to set the Hudson on fire. Beethoven's Opus 110 was the other big piece on his program.

Weill Recital Hall was packed—Elliott Carter and Kurt Masur two among the throng of composers and performers present—for a recital by Jorja Fleezanis and Robert Helps. Miss Fleezanis, now concertmistress of the Minnesota Orchestra, made her name on the West Coast as a champion of new music and an ardent soloist (with the San Francisco Symphony) in Roger Sessions' Violin Concerto. Expecting too much, perhaps, I was somewhat disappointed: the playing was fine-grained, musically alert, but the performances lacked freedom and fire. She kept her eyes fixed earnestly on the scores—unimportant in itself, but her playing often sounded that way. Mr. Helps was a fine-grained, musically alert but reticent pianist. After Ives's Third Sonata, there was a première, Kernis's song cycle "Brilliant Sky, Infinite Sky," for baritone, violin, piano, and percussion. It was delicately worked (and Sanford Sylvan sang expressively), but the musical content was mingy—small ideas protracted. It had none of the exuberance that marked Kernis's cycle "Love Scenes," for soprano and cello, which Dawn Upshaw and André Emelianoff introduced in 1987. There followed a modest Fantasy, for violin and piano, by Mr. Helps,

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and then Enescu's exhilarating Third Sonata, in which Fauré's grace is wedded to Bartók's wildness. Enescu (who died in 1955) is a composer due for discovery. The Angel CD recording of his opera "Oedipe"—in program notes for the concert Michael Steinberg called it "one of the great operas of our century"—has become something of a best-seller.

Among other performers heard recently, two were shining: a soprano who has long been a muse for composers, and a stunning new violinist who will surely inspire compositions. Both had ardent communicativeness. At a Guild of Composers concert in Christ and St. Stephen's, Bethany Beardslee, who was born in 1927, sang Schoenberg's Four Songs, Opus 2, with matchless subtlety of rhythmic impulse, feeling for words, beauty of steady, unforced timbres, and pure intonation. Six years ago, when writing about what was said to be her farewell recital, I regretted a retirement that would evidently be premature. Fortunately, Miss Beardslee changed her mind and is still singing for us—not often, not much at a time, and always within well-judged strengths—and each of her appearances proves precious. Her pianist was Emma Tahmisian, aptly sensitive and poetic.

At the same concert, Mark Steinberg, who was born in 1967 and is still at the Juilliard, played Donald Martino's dazzling Fantasy-Variations (1962), for solo violin, with a command of utterance and rhetoric, with timing and timbres, with a bold grasp of structure which made him the most exciting violinist I have heard in years. There were premières on the program—decent, reasonable works by Walter Winslow, Maurice Wright, and Bruce Hobson—and also David Diamond's Flute Sonata (the Guild concerts this season celebrate Diamond's seventy-fifth and Martino's sixtieth birthdays), but they paled before the flare of the performances by Miss Beardslee and Mr. Steinberg.

AMERICANS watch television free. Most Europeans must pay an annual license fee (in Britain it is seventy-one pounds, about a hundred and forty dollars, for a color set, twenty-four pounds for black-and-white) to a national broadcasting corporation, which is thus enabled to maintain orchestras in the major cities, present operas ignored by the regular companies, and commission new works of all kinds. Among the works created specially for the medium of radio, Britten's collaborations with Auden ("Hadrian's Wall," 1937), Edward Sackville-West ("The Rescue," 1943), and Louis MacNeice ("The Dark Tower," 1946) are famous. This genre is less popular now than it used to be. Serious home listening seems to be on the decline. Last month, a distinguished piece of work for radio, "Hoy (In His Memory)," with a text by Dale Worsley and a score by Charles Dodge, had its first performance not over the air but "broadcast" to an audience at one of the Thursday recitals at the Greenwich House Music School. The text is a monologue, a narrative—thoughts and memories of a hamlet auto mechanic as he recalls an eventful year. Touching, entertaining, sometimes startling, it is eloquently spoken by David Brisbin. Dodge, credited with "audio design" and "audio production" as well as the music, has not simply supplied incidental music; rather, he has "composed" with the recorded voice as the leading line in his score; other ingredients are a banjo tune, electronic music, and naturalistic sounds (birdcalls, a barking dog, shots, some metallic percussion as Hoy plies his trade). All is expertly timed, poetically balanced, sparely executed.

It would not make much sense for an audience to sit for nearly an hour in a darkened hall listening to the radio, as it were. So "Hoy" was played in three installments (each contained four strophe-like episodes of the narrative), divided by two "live" performances. Dodge's "Solar Wind," for double-bass and live electronics, received its première, from Nancy Merriam and Skip Brunner; the instrument's elaborate line is surrounded by halos, whorls of mysterious resonance, sonic streamers. Baird Dodge, the composer's son, played the Viola Elegy (In Memory of Morton Feldman), for viola and tape. Principles of fractal geometry went into the composition of the tape part; the player, a foreground figure moving through the strangely beautiful sonic landscape, "humanizes" it. Like almost all Dodge's music, the Elegy is restrained but romantic, elegantly controlled, moving. There is a fair amount of his work on record, and more is promised.

—ANDREW PORTER

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LETTER FROM LONDON

IN May, 1979, when Margaret Thatcher formed her first Cabinet, she and her ministers sat for the traditional school photo. Twenty-four men, plus one central woman, lined up beneath the dewdrop chandelier, Axminster at their feet, Gainsborough behind them. Twenty-four men trying, variously, to exude *gravitas*, to look youthfully dynamic, to dissemble serious surprise at being there in the first place. Ten of the two dozen are faced with the first real problem of political office: what to do with your hands when sitting in the front row of an official photograph. Folding your arms, like Keith Joseph, looks a defensive, prim, keep-off gesture. Clasping your hands over your capacious stomach, like Lord Hailsham, looks the boast of a gourmandizer. Grasping the left wrist with the right hand, and allowing the left hand to dangle on the thigh, like Lord Carrington, seems indecisive, semi-wet. Half cupping both hands in front of the groin, like James Prior, is frankly inadvisable. Alternatively, as three of the ten newly appointed front-rank ministers do, you can deposit the hands, with fingers spread, firmly upon the thigh just above the knee. This pose looks crisply businesslike: here we are, ready for action, keen to clear up the mess left by the last government. So that is one problem solved. The second problem is what to do with the face: that intended smile of quiet confidence might translate as unctuous self-satisfaction, while the plan to appear weighty yet full of vigor often misfires into an expression of high anxiety. Perhaps the best solution is to be as straightforward as possible, and just look very cheerful.

One man who has found the correct line on both face and hands sits two places to Mrs. Thatcher's left: a bespectacled figure, gray-haired but youthful, beaming but thrustful—in essence, jolly happy. So he should be: he has managed the conversion from liberal Conservatism to Thatcherism without angst, he was a key figure in drafting the election manifesto, and he has just been appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. His name is Sir Geoffrey Howe, and for the next eleven years he is to remain the most loyal, the least disliked, and the most uncharismatic of leading Tory ministers. He is to spend four years as Chancellor, six as Foreign Secretary, one and a quarter as Deputy Prime Minister. His loyalty and tenacity can be judged by the fact that when he finally resigned, on November 1, 1990, he was the last but one of the original twenty-five Axminster squatters to depart: only Mrs. Thatcher herself remained of that team. Sir Geoffrey's longevity might not have surprised observers in 1979. What would have surprised them is that within a month of his departure, and as a direct consequence of it, Mrs. Thatcher herself, who had in the meantime won two more general elections and still enjoyed a majority of support within the Parliamentary Party, would be hustled into suburban exile, thus bringing to an end the longest Premiership since the second Earl of Liverpool's unappealing stint of power, from 1812 to 1827.

For much of last year, there was a tangy smell to British political life, though whether it was just the whiff of well-hung game—a mature government becoming more mature—wasn't clear. Certainly it was a year of deaths and resignations, though at first many of them had a comic slant. In June, for instance, the Social Democratic Party, after a decade of oscillating fortunes, finally went into liquidation. Founded in 1981 to wide media acclaim, the S.D.P. in its early years looked to have revived the center of British politics and established a three-party system. But it was undone successively by the Falklands War (which solidified Tory support), by the voting system (proportional representation would have greatly helped the cause), by its own factionalism, and by a revived, middle-ground Labour Party. The S.D.P. laid itself out and tucked the shroud around its own starved frame after a humiliating by-election in the Lancashire town of Bootle. In late 1981 and early 1982, the S.D.P. had actually held an opinion-poll lead over both the Conservatives and Labour. Eight years later, at Bootle, their candidate was not treated seriously by the electorate; worse, he was not even treated as a joke. The candidate for Screaming Lord Sutch's Monster Raving Loony Cavern Rock Party—which comes into existence only at by-elections, in order to publicize an aging rock star—received four hundred and eighteen votes, out of thirty-five thousand four hundred and seventy-seven. The S.D.P. polled a dismal hundred and fifty-five.

Some of the resignations were distinctly comic, too. Take the case of Patrick Nicholls, a forty-one-year-old Junior Environment Minister, solicitor, and keen Thatcherite, whose more or less invisible career ended, after three years, in a moment of spectacular self-combustion. As minister responsible for health and safety at work, Nicholls campaigned against alcohol abuse. In March, he told an Alcohol Concern conference, "Quite simply, alcohol and work do not mix," pointing to the deleterious effects on health, family well-being, and company profits. In October, Mr. Nicholls was himself at work, and most publicly so, at the

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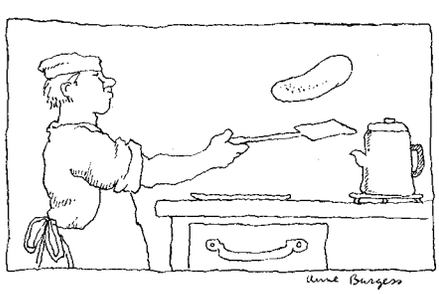
Conservative Party Conference in Bournemouth. On Wednesday, October 10th, he sat on the platform listening to—or, at least, present at—the Home Secretary's warnings about drunken driving. That same evening, Mr. Nicholls went out to dinner with friends. Prudently, he had arranged with a local taxi firm for a cab to pick up the revellers at ten-fifteen and take them to Portsmouth. The agreed charge was to be forty-seven pounds. Imprudently, Mr. Nicholls and his party lingered at the restaurant until after midnight, at which point, the taxi-driver informed them, the cost of transportation had gone up to £62.50. More imprudently, the Minister turned this offer down, thus depriving the cabbie of his hoped-for profit. Most imprudently of all, he then asked the fellow to drive him as far as a car park, where he collected his own vehicle. Now, Bournemouth during a Conservative Party Conference must be one of the most densely policed areas of the country, and it is believed that the taxi-driver, in understandable pique, denounced the Junior Minister to the local constabulary. Mr. Nicholls' career vanished as a flashing blue light pursued him out of the darkness. It was the update of a cautionary tale by Hilaire Belloc:

> Lord Finchley tried to mend the Electric Light
> Himself. It struck him dead: And serve him right!
> It is the business of the wealthy man
> To give employment to the artisan.

The grand farce of the year, however, was the resignation of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Mr. Nicholas Ridley. At first, it seemed a purely comic business, though it was here that one of the year's most powerful, if latent, political themes began to emerge: Europe. Most Cabinet ministers (and Mrs. Thatcher managed to chomp her way through fifty-six of them, in fifteen major reshuffles) resign or get sacked for disagreeing with the Prime Minister or her advisers. Mr. Ridley managed the rare and ingenious trick of being obliged to resign because he agreed all too thoroughly with the Prime Minister. His only mistake was to express in public opinions that Mrs. Thatcher could permit herself to endorse only in private. Ridley was, however, no damp-eared aspirant trying to fawn upon his leader; he was a trusted friend and political soulmate. Oddly, the old bruiser was valued equally on both sides of the House: Mrs. Thatcher saw in him someone unquestioningly devoted to the ideals of the market, while the Opposition treasured him for being just the sort of Tory they needed—not just a viscount's second son but one who every so often was given to making huge and exploitable gaffes. His devotion to the power of the market was evidenced during his spell as a minister at the Foreign Office, when he tackled the problems of decolonization in a novel way. He reportedly offered the Prime Minister of the Turks and Caicos Islands twelve million pounds to go independent (the huffy reply came that they wanted forty million and would revolt if bought off for less), while in 1980, two years before the Falklands War, he proposed that the continuing problem of these southerly islands be solved by transferring them to Argentina and then leasing them back—a suggestion that caused patriotic uproar in the Commons. Mr. Ridley's gaffes provoked almost as much of a stir as his politics. As Secretary of State for the Environment, he denounced country dwellers who were in favor of land development as long as it didn't happen near them—what he called the NIMBY factor. A little bit of journalistic digging later, and it emerged that Mr. Ridley himself had objected when a local farmer tried to build in a field backing onto his eighteenth-century Gloucestershire rectory. Even more embarrassing was his remark a few days after a cross-Channel ferry (named, ironically, the Herald of Free Enterprise) sank off Zeebrugge with the loss of a hundred and ninety-three lives. Ridley made a joke about a fellow-minister's going full steam ahead: "Though he is a pilot of the bill, I hasten to add he has not got his front doors open." He confessed the comment to be "inappropriate, inopportune, insensitive," and was permitted to survive. So he was never low-profile, and with a less understanding P.M. he might well have departed earlier. He entertained the right—for instance, by calling the Greens "pseudo Marxists"—and he infuriated the left with his dismissive, patrician air and his art of taking laissez-faire to the point of inertia. Even his chain-smoking—a reported four packs of Silk Cut per day—seemed designed to infuriate. When he arrived at the Department of Trade and Industry and said that in the long run his policy was to abolish the place, Labour dubbed him the minister with "no in-tray, no out-tray, only an ash-tray."



But this Grand Guignol figure, officially licensed to scare the lefties, finally overstepped. He gave an interview to the right-wing weekly *The Spectator* (no danger there, surely); the editor asked him a few questions, and Ridley said what he thought. About European monetary union: "This is all a German racket designed to take over the whole of Europe. It has to be thwarted." About the European Commissioners: "Seventeen unelected reject politicians." About the French: "Behaving like poodles to the Germans." About the Germans: "Uppity." About the Irish: "Ireland gets six per cent of their gross domestic product [from the Community, by way of subsidy]. . . . When's Ireland going to stand up to the Germans?" On Helmut Kohl: "I'm not sure I wouldn't rather have the [air-raid] shelters and the chance to fight back than simply being taken over by economics. He'll soon be coming here and trying to say this is what we should do on the banking front and this is what our taxes should be. I mean, he'll soon be trying to take over everything." On Britain, Germany, the E.C., the European Commissioners, and the question of national sovereignty: "I'm not against giving up sovereignty in principle, but not to this lot. You might just as well give it to Adolf Hitler, frankly."

Now, it is a well-established convention of British politics that you are allowed to mock the Irish and are positively encouraged to vilify the French (who understand the rules of the game, and react to being called poodles with the most urbane of shrugs), but Germany is another matter. So first there was the official denial, and then the resignation. This being Ridley, however, the "official denial" didn't relate to the words allegedly spoken but to the level of alcohol in the blood at the time. Count Otto

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Lambsdorff, the leader of the German Liberal Party, declared that the Trade Secretary "was either drunk . . . or he could not stomach England's World Cup defeat at the hands of the Germans." But Ridley was not known for his interest in soccer, so the initial conclusion, drawn even by some of his Conservative colleagues, was that he must have been plastered. Not so: the editor of *The Spectator* assured the world that during their lunch together Ridley had imbibed only "the smallest glass of wine." This left unanswered one interesting question: If insulting the Germans while sober is a matter for resignation, is insulting the Germans while drunk a greater or a lesser offense? Would Ridley have survived if it could have been proved that he was sozzled out of his skull? But, no, he was sober, and soon jobless. Tracked down in Budapest on the day *The Spectator* came out, Ridley commented, "This time I've really gone and done it." He had: two days later, Mrs. Thatcher was tenderly accepting his resignation.

Of course, Mr. Ridley's words were not just a contextless outburst occasioned by, say, the sight of a dachshund or by a corked bottle of German wine from which he had taken only "the smallest glass." If Mrs. Thatcher officially dissociated herself from his views and his language, her suspicions about economic and monetary union—and her fear that it might lead to a Europe dominated by a powerful, enlarged Germany—were well known. Ridley's interview, however miscalculated, was part of a long wrangle within the Conservative Party and, more particularly, within the Cabinet. The old argument—which in the sixties and seventies had split both Tories and Labour, leading to bizarre coalitions of Tory right and Labour left—was whether or not to join Europe. The new argument is about what sort of Europeans the British want to be: reluctant, carping, tail-end-Charlie Europeans or bright-eyed, opportunity-grabbing, here-comes-the-sun Europeans. Where do we define ourselves on the spectrum from insularity to federalism, from aloofness to camaraderie? These are not, of course, the sort of questions that profoundly stir the soul of the average voter; and it was all the stranger to see them dividing the most traditionally united of British political parties, the Conservatives. It was, perhaps, a measure of the extent to which under Mrs. Thatcher the Party changed from one of pragmatism and fudge to one of ideology and dogma that this should have happened.

It was the question of Europe again, and Sir Geoffrey Howe's resignation over it, that brought an astonishingly swift leadership crisis—the first serious one in fifteen years—and the equally swift departure of Mrs. Thatcher. She had, it is true, been unpopular in the opinion polls for some time, and Sir Geoffrey was Deputy Leader of the Party and Leader of the House. But Mrs. Thatcher had toughed her way out of unpopularity before, and Sir Geoffrey's titles should not be overestimated: Deputy Leader is more akin to Emeritus Professor than to Vice-President, while the Leadership of the House is usually given to an amiable but efficient old buffer whose political time has passed, as it seemingly had for Sir Geoffrey when Mrs. Thatcher humiliatingly sacked him as Foreign Secretary seventeen months previously. He was and is, as they say, "well liked" and "greatly respected," which means that he is a cautious career politician who has never raised either his voice or the temperature of the room; who in forty years of professional oratory has never threatened the dictionary of quotations; whose honesty has never been questioned and whose loyalty has never been doubted; whose survival has depended on a basic competence, a general inability to give or take offense, and a skill at blending effortlessly with the wallpaper.

If politics were a fairy tale—and sometimes it is—and Mrs. Thatcher were the Wicked Witch, then Sir Geoffrey would be the elderly Bunny Rabbit who every morning loyally fixed her porridge and fetched her shaving water. One day, despite his years of service, the Wicked Witch viciously cut off his ears and whiskers, but still Old Geoff hung about the Gingerbread Cottage, because even though she'd cut off his ears and whiskers, she had given him a nice present of a secondhand waistcoat at the same time, and Geoff thought he looked quite smart in it. Slowly, however, he began to realize that an old waistcoat didn't quite make up for the loss of his ears and whiskers,

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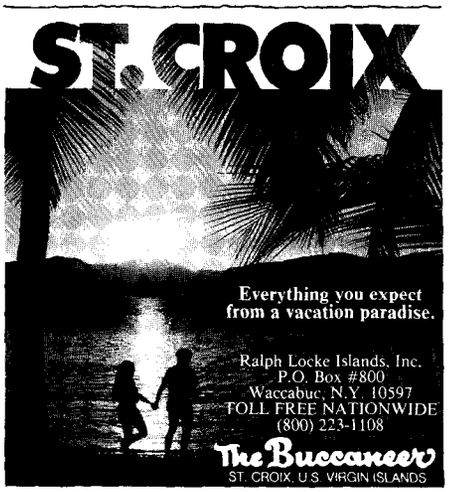

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and so after sulking for a year and a half he just lolloped off into the forest. Whereupon—and this is the peculiar part of the story—all the other animals, who had admitted that the Witch had a perfect right to cut off his ears and whiskers if she thought it necessary, were up in arms about Old Geoff's hurt feelings, stormed the Gingerbread Cottage, and flung the Wicked Witch onto the dung heap. Then everybody looked for a moral.

MORE precisely, what happened was this. In late October, there was a two-day summit in Rome of European Community leaders, at which it was decided that January, 1994, would mark the start of the next stage of economic and monetary union; beyond that, a single European currency would be established "in a reasonable time"—which might mean 1998 or 2000, depending on economic performance. Afterward, Mrs. Thatcher in an outburst of acrimony and pique openly dissociated herself from the communiqué: the agreement reached was "like cloud-cuckoo land"; sterling was "the most powerful expression of sovereignty you can have"; and "if anyone is suggesting that I would go to Parliament and suggest the abolition of the pound sterling—no!" This was, of course, roughly, if not exactly, what most, if not all, of the others were suggesting. St. Augustine's cry was "Give me chastity and continency but not yet"; Mrs. Thatcher's has been "Give me economic and monetary union but not yet." Some of those close to Mrs. Thatcher put it about that she had been bounced into an agreement by Continental knavery. However, the European leaders had become accustomed to the British Prime Minister's position as a one-woman awkward squad. As President Mitterrand suavely observed, "it is not for the slowest country to tell the others how quickly they should move to European union."

A new declaration of strident Euro-laggardliness, though no surprise to the eleven other E.C. leaders—or, for that matter, to the wider British public—was finally too much, however, for the Deputy Leader. Within a week, he had resigned, citing, among other reasons, "the mood" Mrs. Thatcher had struck in Rome. His resignation letter was that of a man weary of constantly papering over the cracks and of nudging his reluctant leader centimetre by centimetre along the road to Europe. "I shall, of course," he concluded, "maintain my support for your government." Mrs. Thatcher in her reply downplayed their differences on Europe—"not . . . nearly as great as you suggest"—and declared herself "most grateful for your assurance of continued support." The Labour leader, Neil Kinnock, a man noted more for verbal fluency than for verbal finesse, declared that "Mrs. Thatcher has been bitten by the man she treated as a doormat, and she deserves it."

The resignation of a senior minister usually comes in two parts: the act of demission, which may or may not be timed to embarrass the Government, and the subsequent resignation speech before the House of Commons. The latter occasions are comparatively solemn moments in the continuing adversarial rowdiness of Commons life: the minister will be listened to in decent silence, the Opposition quietly working out the plus factor for them (and nodding sympathetically when the ex-minister explains how beastly She has been to him), the Government reckoning the damage limitation that might be necesssary. Sir Geoffrey came before the House on the afternoon of Tuesday, November 13th, and perhaps the fact that in the twelve days since his resignation former Cabinet colleagues and others had queued up to explain to the media that his differences with the Prime Minister were more of style than of substance had toughened his resolve. For the speech he proceeded to give was very much not that of a man maintaining his promised support for a government. Those who witnessed it from the Government benches judged it a devastating blow to Mrs. Thatcher and a signal for a leadership race to start; the Opposition called for an immediate general election (though Oppositions tend to call for an immediate general election whenever a mouse runs out of the wainscot). Later that evening, outside the House of Commons, Tory knights of the shires blinked into the TV lights like endangered moths and declared that they had not heard a resignation speech with such oomph in twenty—nay, twenty-five—years. The Biting Doormat had taken a chunk out of the Lady of the House. Or, as Peter Rost, M.P. for Erewash, put it, "A dead sheep has turned out to be a Rottweiler in drag. It was the most dramatic performance I have experienced in twenty years."

"Dramatic" here has to be understood in the context of Sir Geoffrey Howe. He stood halfway down the Tory benches, next to his fellow-sufferer Nigel Lawson, ex-Chancellor and the previous year's Thatcher Euro-victim; he spoke quietly, hunched over his notes, occasionally letting go of them with one hand to saw the air vigorously to a depth of several millimetres. He looked and sounded like a suburban bank manager regretfully explaining why an overdraft could not be extended, but in fact he was doing his best to bring down a Prime Minister. Were the differences between the two of them merely matters of style? "If some of my former colleagues are to be believed, I must be the first minister in history to resign because he was in full agreement with government policy." (Perhaps Sir Geoffrey was forgetting the case of Nicholas Ridley.) He had, he said, shared something like seven hundred Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet meetings with Mrs. Thatcher over the previous eighteen years, and spent some four hundred hours alongside her at more than thirty international summits. Most of it had been a great privilege, and so on. But latterly things had changed. The Prime Minister, he said, "increasingly risks leading herself and others astray in matters of substance as well as style." On style, he mentioned the P.M.'s habit of adding "background noise" and "personalized incredulity" to official statements, and cited what a British businessman working in Europe had written to him (with impeccable timing) the previous week. "People throughout Europe," complained the businessman, "see on Prime Minister's finger wagging, and hear her passionate No, No, No, much more clearly than the content of the carefully worded formal texts." As for substance, Howe portrayed the P.M. as deeply uncommitted to Europe, as one who "seems sometimes to look out upon a continent that is positively teeming with ill-intentioned people, scheming, in her words, to extinguish democracy, to 'dissolve our national identities,' to lead us 'through the back door into a

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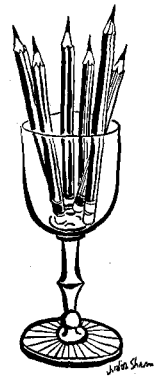
federal Europe.' " Sir Geoffrey even quoted Winston Churchill against her —a matchlessly impudent move, since Mrs. Thatcher has herself copyrighted quoting from Churchill in recent years, the only exception granted being when a toadying M.P. desires to compare the two Premiers. Howe concluded by saying that in resigning "I have done what I believe to be right for my party and my country," and he added, "The time has come for others to consider their own response to the tragic conflict of loyalties with which I have myself wrestled for perhaps too long." That "perhaps" was a classic moment of Howeish qualification (as in "I have perhaps married you" or "We are perhaps declaring war"), but the fact that in delivery and phraseology Sir Geoffrey remained throughout his speech almost parodically Howeish made—very well, *perhaps* made—its impact the greater.

Tory M.P.s taken aback by Sir Geoffrey's low-key vehemence couldn't believe that he was the author of such disloyalty, and some fingered the ex-Minister's wife, who was known to dislike Mrs. Thatcher's policies. "A speech it took Elspeth Howe ten minutes to write and Geoffrey ten years to deliver" was one verdict. But the question of authorship was not pursued, for Sir Geoffrey, like a one-sting wasp that had done its business, now fell down behind the radiator, his distant buzz drowned by the whirr of an arriving hornet. The day after Howe spoke in the Commons, Michael Heseltine, a former Cabinet minister who had stalked the Prime Minister from the back benches since his resignation in January, 1986, announced that he would stand for the leadership. Unlike Sir Geoffrey, who in forty years of politics has been compared only to a lead sheep and a biting doormat, Heseltine has always been a high-profile politician, whose active, warrior presence (and slight absurdity) is reflected in his nickname: Tarzan. Like Mrs. Thatcher, he is a rich, well-groomed, fairly glamorous blond who makes the rank and file's heart beat faster; but, whereas Mrs. Thatcher is a millionaire only by marriage, Heseltine is one in his own right. His current fortune is put at approximately sixty-five million pounds, which makes him the richest man in the House of Commons. It has also allowed him to fund what for nearly five years amounted to an undeclared campaign for the leadership. Now at last the challenge was in the open. "Tarzan vs. The Iron Lady" —it may sound like a novelty fight rather low down on a wrestling bill, but it engrossed the nation.

In 1952, while still an undergraduate at Oxford (where he was known, variously, as Michael Philistine, for his cultural interests, and Von Heseltine, for his Aryan looks), Heseltine scribbled a campaign plan for life on the back of an envelope. Presidency of the Oxford Union, the successful pursuit of a fortune, a seat in Parliament, a post in the Cabinet—all of these he noted and duly achieved. Finally, in his master plan from all those years ago, he had written against the nineties: "Downing Street." It's apposite, almost poignant, to note that in the 1979 Cabinet photograph Heseltine stands immediately behind Mrs. Thatcher's chair —perfectly placed to be the smiler with the knife. From the beginning, he was openly ambitious (the ambition is not a sin in British politics, the openness is); he cut a good figure at Tory Party conferences, where any half-decent-looking man stands out like a film star; as a minister, he was a diligent Thatcherite, selling off council houses and privatizing government ordnance factories; he seemed bright but not damagingly intelligent. As his old friend and fellow-M.P. Julian Critchley has written, "Michael is surely no intellectual, but that is no handicap in the Tory Party." A greater handicap might have been that to the Conservative Old Guard he seemed a bit flash, something of a counter-jumper. From middle-class Swansea, via property development and publishing, to a house in Belgravia, plus a four-hundred-acre country estate whose park gates had been recast to include the self-promoting initials "MRDH"—wasn't that taking social mobility a little damn far? William Whitelaw, former Deputy Prime Minister to Mrs. Thatcher and one of the bluff-squire contingent, dismissed Heseltine as "a man who combs his hair in public." But such sneers and snobberies from the aristocratic and squirearchical end of the Tory Party are inevitable, amounting mainly to an admission of a loss of power. The last two Conservative Prime Ministers have endured similar smirks: Edward Heath was widely known as the Grocer, Margaret Thatcher as the Grocer's Daughter (not because of her political succession but because her father ran a corner shop).



More pertinent than the charge of uppityness was the suggestion that Tarzan lived up to his nickname—that he swung unpredictably through the trees while letting rip with attention-grabbing howls. This reputation is based mainly on two incidents. In the first, back in 1976, he seized the mace during a debate in the House of Commons and waved it about in an indecorous fashion. In the second, ten years after the first, he stormed impetuously out of Mrs. Thatcher's Cabinet, consigning himself to the wilderness of the back benches. Those were two things that everyone knew about Mr. Heseltine; but now that he was transformed from flamboyant outsider into postulant Premier they were held up to the light again, and this time showed a quite different aspect. Did he seize the mace and wave it Tarzanically around, threatening to brain the poor, quivering front-bench members of the then Labour Government with this blunt and glittering object? Was it a rash and vulgar act, which offended against the dignity of the House? Not at all, according to the corrected version: it was a subtle gesture, a piece of stage irony, one that at the time had brought cheers from those old Tory graybeards who later tut-tutted.

As for the resignation from Mrs. Thatcher's Cabinet, both its matter and its manner are worth examining. Resignation in politics is a bit like creative bankruptcy: if effected in the right way and at the right time, it can restore the fortunes, and even the reputation. Look, the electorate says, here we are dealing with a man of principle, someone who puts wider considerations above his pocket and his badge of office —we'll remember that later. But you have to choose the right issue. A resignation over the Munich agreement with Hitler gave a career-long mark of sanctity. A resignation over the Anglo-French invasion of Suez was equally dramatic, though trickier. (Charges of treachery were subsequently laid by the Tory right.) Unfortunately, most politicians never obtain the required coin-

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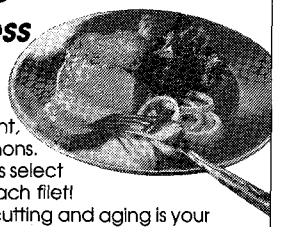

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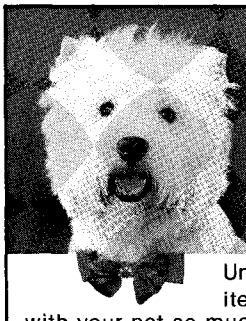

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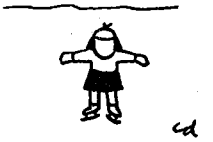
cidence of a national event, a question of principle, and a moment in their career when *reculer pour mieux sauter* is the best policy. Michael Heseltine resigned from Mrs. Thatcher's Cabinet over what is known as the Westland Helicopter Affair. Four years later, few can remember, and even fewer care about, the details of this imbroglio. Voters might recall the sale of a British helicopter company to an American firm; Heseltine, as Minister of Defence, wanting a European bid to be discussed; some paper-shuffling and maneuvering by Mrs. Thatcher's minions; Heseltine storming out of the Cabinet; the business of some leaked papers; then another ministerial resignation. But the principle involved? Something to do with a defense asset's staying in European hands, something to do with the way Cabinet government should operate, and much to do with the principle of the Prime Minister's being a beastly old bossy-boots.



Most voters, however, would remember one thing about the event: that Mr. Heseltine had "stormed" out of No. 10. The word was constantly applied. It was, after all, the verb of departure that fitted his image: he was Action Man, dynamic, Tarzanic. How else could he possibly depart? Over the past four years, everyone believed in the storming. But once Mr. Heseltine became a potential Prime Minister he began to deny in television interviews that "storm" was at all an appropriate word to describe his behavior that long-ago morning: no, he had merely expressed his inability any longer to serve, gathered up his papers, and left. Altogether more decorous and responsible, and more appropriate to one now seeking to return to No. 10 in a fuller capacity. And it has to be said that accounts given at the time by those present confirm the later, more sober version of events. Mr. Heseltine was overruled on a procedural matter and said quietly in response, "I cannot accept that decision. I must therefore leave this Cabinet." Then he left. But his colleagues were comically unsure of what he had intended. By "this Cabinet" did he mean "this particular meeting of the Cabinet" or did he mean "your Cabinet, which you, Madam, run in an unacceptable way"? Only when news filtered back from the street outside that Heseltine had confirmed his resignation could colleagues be sure of what they had just witnessed. And then what did they do? Douglas Hurd, Home Secretary at the time, recalled a few days later how amusingly British the whole scene had been. According to him, the Cabinet carried on almost as if nothing had happened. There was a discussion about Nigeria and, after a coffee break, a perfectly sensible round-table debate on rates reform.

Rates reform: it is apposite that this was what the Cabinet went on to discuss, and, moreover, that their exchange appeared "perfectly sensible." For if they had scarcely been aware at the time of what Heseltine had done, neither did they predict what rates reform would lead to in the next few years: deep unpopularity of the Government, street fighting in central London, renewed perception of the Prime Minister as an unfeeling autocrat, dismay at constituency level, disaffection among the skilled-working-class and lower-middle-class voters the Tories need to carry in order to win a fourth election in a row—and then, to an Elmer Bernstein score, the thunderous return from out of the west, sun glinting in his golden locks, of none other than Michael Heseltine. And this time it would be accurate to say that when he returned to center stage he did indeed "storm" back.

The old rating system in Britain was the means by which citizens contributed to local government revenue. Each house or apartment was assigned by the local authority a "ratable value" based theoretically on the value of the place if anyone wanted to rent it. It was a rough-and-ready system, made more so by the long periods of time between the revaluation of properties for rating purposes (revaluations that were always unpopular), but it meant, more or less, that those who lived in large houses paid more toward the cost of local services than those who lived in small ones, and that the poor paid significantly less, or nothing at all. Every so often during the postwar period, there would be grumbles about the rates, but after other systems—such as a local sales tax or a local income tax—were examined, the existing method was concluded to be the least bad. What stirred the Tories into action in 1987 was three things. First, a series of run-ins between central Tory government and "high-spending" (as they were

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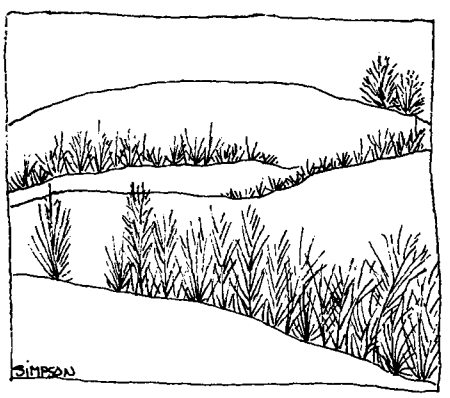
always dubbed) local Labour councils, which in Tory eyes needed bringing to heel. Second, a fear of a forthcoming rates revaluation in England and Wales, which was likely to prove extremely unpopular. And, third, the simple fact that Thatcherism was a doctrine of radical reform, and after a while there weren't too many things left still in need of radical reform. Mrs. Thatcher took a strong personal interest in the abolition of the rates, and orders were orders. It goes almost without saying that one of the most enthusiastic proponents of the self-mutilating course the Tories now embarked on was Mr. Nicholas Ridley.

The new "community charge" to replace the rates was introduced in Scotland on April 1, 1989, and in England and Wales a year later. Based not on property value but on local citizenship, it was very easy to understand, and its justification went like this: since everyone living in the same area makes roughly the same use of the same amenities (roads, schools, hospitals, policing, refuse collection, libraries, street lighting, and so on), then everyone should pay roughly the same amount to support these services. Under the rating system, some forty-five billion pounds was raised from some fourteen million electors. Millions paid nothing yet benefitted from the services; how much fairer to spread the cost of these services more widely among the thirty-four million local electors. That was the logic; but importantly close to the surface of the reforming Tory mind lay the following social vignette: decent Tory voters in nasty Labour boroughs being squeezed for unfairly high rates and constantly outvoted by squalid nests of four-to-a-council-flat Labourites who were being featherbedded by rates rebates that acted as an open bribe to carry on voting Labour. The community charge, as its name implied, was about democratically equal fiscal responsibility within a given area. Opponents said that it was a poll tax, a straight per-capita levy. Just as you can tell an Irishman's politics from the use of "Londonderry," as opposed to "Derry," so the employment of "community charge" or "poll tax" translates immediately into "pro" or "anti." Within weeks of its introduction, only members of the Tory Cabinet and diehard loyalists were sticking to "community charge."

In the summer of 1989, the Tory Reform Group had predicted, "It has all the makings of a disaster. The poll tax is fair only in the sense that the black death was fair." They were right: the tax was an immediate disaster. One trouble with very simple ideas is that what is wrong with them becomes swiftly apparent to even the dimmest opponent. In the present case, everyone could see what the tax implied: that two street-sweepers living in a single room at the most fetid end of the Borough of Westminster would pay the same as a millionaire and his well-salaried wife living at No. 10 Downing Street. The earl in his castle (or Tarzan behind his monogrammed gates) would benefit by several hundred or several thousand pounds; massed farm laborers and their families would bear this cost. Mrs. Thatcher likes to offer patronizing economic homilies to her opponents, and a favorite, oft-repeated line goes "You don't make the poor richer by making the rich poorer." Here, though, was the starkest possible case of making the rich richer while at the same time, and by the same process, making the poor (and middle-incomed) poorer.

In the first year of the tax in Scotland, a hundred and fifty-eight million pounds, or 16.3 per cent of expected revenue, went uncollected. The next year, it got worse: by September, 1990, almost halfway through the fiscal year, seven hundred and sixty-nine million pounds, or seventy-three per cent of the tax, had still not been paid. Attempts at arresting bank accounts and wages proved largely unsuccessful; in Strathclyde, five hundred thousand warrants had to be issued. Many refused to pay the second year's tax as a protest against subsidizing those who hadn't paid the first time round. In England and Wales, the poll tax was no less resented. On March 31st, there was the biggest riot central London had seen in decades: a pitched battle in Trafalgar Square, cars burned out in St. Martin's Lane, looting in the Charing Cross Road. Three hundred and thirty-nine people were arrested, and a hundred and forty-four needed hospital treatment. Trotskyist and anarchist groups were blamed for hijacking a peaceful demonstration; even so, that protest was itself massive, consisting of two hundred thousand people.



Complaints came from all political quarters, about both the nature of the tax and the blithe ineptitude of its implementation. The Government had estimated that nationally the average community-charge bill would be two hundred and seventy-eight pounds (as opposed to the previous year's average rates of two hundred and seventy-four pounds); it turned out to be three hundred and seventy pounds. Nor could the Government blame those "high-spending" Labour councils; the Tory tax hit the Tory shires. Government estimates of tax levels in Chelmsford and Dover, for instance, were a hundred and eighty-one pounds and a hundred and fifty pounds; the levels set by these Tory councils were, respectively, three hundred and ninety-seven pounds and two hundred and ninety-eight pounds. In West Oxfordshire, eighteen Conservative councillors resigned en masse in protest against the community charge; when the leader of this group stood for reëlection as an independent, he defeated the official Tory candidate by a margin of four to one.

The grumbles and the rumbles continued all year, as a stretched bureaucracy sought to administer an unwelcome tax. Demands sent out to those who had recently died seemed more shocking when the charge was per capita rather than merely on property. A group of soldiers on Salisbury Plain tried to refuse the charge, on the ground that they didn't use council services; magistrates ordered three hundred and eighty-nine of them to pay. On the Isle of Wight, there was a mass summons of four thousand defaulters; the case collapsed in farce, because the reminders had been sent out by second-class post, thus not giving people enough time to pay. In the East London borough of Tower Hamlets, the Liberal Democrat council threatened to cut off refuse collection for those who failed to stump up. Elsewhere, bailiffs did a growing business. "Can't Pay—Won't Pay" was the protesters' slogan. By the end of October,

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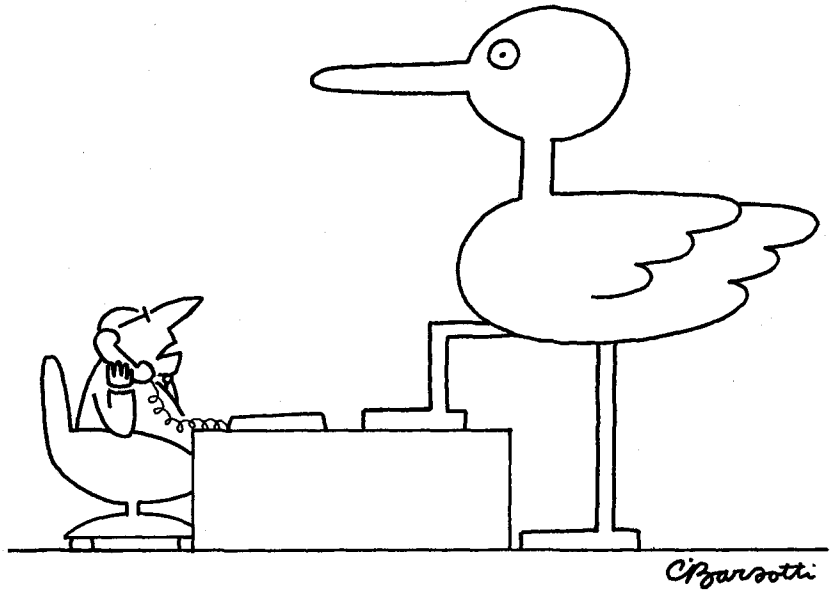

"Benign so far."

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six months after the introduction of the charge, one in seven of the thirty-six million poll-tax payers in England had paid nothing; a quarter of Londoners were not coöperating; the London borough of Haringey had nonpayment running at forty-two per cent. Nor could it even be argued that the tax was efficient to organize: collecting it cost twelve pounds per head, as against five pounds per head for the rates.

The most prominent Tory to campaign against the poll tax—or, at least, against the manner of its implementation—was Michael Heseltine. In May, writing in the *Times*, he linked it directly, if grandiloquently, to Tory chances at the next election: "In many of the marginal constituencies by which the tenure of power is determined, the community charge is perceived to have broken the Disraelian compact upon which Tory power rests," which translates as "Make it easy on the skilled workers or we're scuppered, mate." His three main suggestions were: that local authorities should be free to set whatever level of budget they chose, but that if they exceeded the Government's calculation by a certain percentage local elections must be called to give the budget a proper mandate; that politically damaging taxes—on students, student nurses, the elderly living at home, and the physically disabled—should be scrapped; and that better-off members of the community should pay more. The lumpy Newspeak for this last, unThatcherite concept is "banding upwards by income."

SO the first round of the leadership election, a straight fight between Tarzan and the Iron Lady, was about Europe, the poll tax, the Conservative Party's hopes of winning a fourth successive general election, the notion that the Cabinet should be properly consulted by the Prime Minister, and the notion that Mrs. Thatcher was barkingly out of control and handbagged anyone who uttered a squeak against her. The campaign lasted less than a week, but was nasty enough to gratify the most vampiric Opposition. The natural tactics for a sitting Prime Minister would have been to go about her business as normal, looking serene and efficient, while the impertinent pretender jumped up and down trying to draw attention to himself. In fact, the opposite took place—a clear sign of unease on the part of the Thatcher camp. True, the P.M. took herself off to Paris a couple of days before the vote, to attend the Conference on Security and Coöperation in Europe, but the reckless accusations were all coming from her side. These were mainly along the risible line that Mr. Heseltine, the richest man in the House of Commons, the counter-jumping squire, the committed privatizer, was secretly, deep down under that suspicious blond hair of his, some kind of crypto-socialist. Mrs. Thatcher attacked Heseltine from Paris, while at home her team wheeled out two of her favorite old bruisers, Norman Tebbit and the inescapable Nicholas Ridley, to do a bit of kneeing and gouging on their former Cabinet colleague. Ridley, ironically, was now seen as the official Thatcher spokesman on Europe, although this time he managed to avoid references to uppity Germans and the poodles of Paris. The chief wicked things alleged against Heseltine were that in economic policy he would be "interventionist" and "corporatist," while over Europe he would be "federalist." It was rather too jargonized for true knee-in-the-groin stuff, but at least it allowed Heseltine to take the high, not to say Prime Ministerial, ground. When Mrs. Thatcher accused him of a mixture of "personal ambitions and private rancor," he could afford a statesmanlike smile, while the rest of us were left to wonder at the concept of "impersonal ambitions," from which presumably Mrs. Thatcher had been suffering when she ousted the sitting Tory leader Edward Heath in 1975.

The Labour Party, which knows all about political masochism and ruling oneself out of power by internal strife, sat back with rare pleasure as the Tory Party drew the ceremonial sword across its own belly. Tory M.P.s of an older vintage must have looked back with fondness to the pre-1965 days, when a "magic circle" decided such matters, and when after "the customary processes of consultation" a new leader simply "emerged." Postulant A would be told to dust off his morning suit for a visit to Buckingham Palace, and Postulant B instructed to walk out into the snow and not come back for some time. Now the whole system had gone open, messy, and uncontrollably democratic. Worse, it had snarled itself up with some quite unnecessary sophistications. To win on the first ballot, a candidate needs to obtain an over-all majority but also fifteen per cent more of the votes cast than his or her opponent. Thus, in the present case, if there were no abstentions, Mrs. Thatcher could defeat Mr. Heseltine by fifty or so votes in a straight fight and yet be driven to a second ballot. At a second ballot, other candidates might come in, complicating things further and splitting the vote. The fifteen-per-cent factor is discarded in this second round, but if no candidate has an over-all majority the contest might still be dead-

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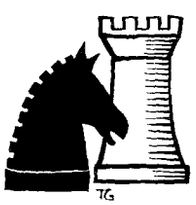
locked, and thus go into a third round. Worse, there are no provisions for candidates to drop out between the second and third rounds, and if no clear majority is obtained at the third time of asking, then a transferable-vote system operates until white smoke finally dribbles from the chimney.

The first ballot approached with the Tories in extraordinary disarray. Nobody knew quite how the voting system worked. Nobody knew who might or might not declare himself in a second ballot. Those who wanted neither Heseltine nor Thatcher would have to decide whether to abstain, and perhaps hand Thatcher a first-ballot victory, or to vote for Heseltine, and possibly give him such a head of steam that their own second-ballot candidate would have no chance. Conservative M.P.s faced more than tactical problems, too. Should they be loyal to the past, to a Prime Minister who had won three successive elections, or be practical about saving their own skins at the next general election? Mrs. Thatcher was widely agreed to be the Conservative Party's biggest asset and also its biggest handicap. Polls published over the crucial weekend of the first-round campaign showed that while a Thatcher-led Party trailed Labour by fifteen points, a switch to Heseltine would transform the deficit into a one-point lead. Yet even if the troubled M.P. persuaded himself into that juicy position where personal, party, and national interests appeared to be the same, there were other, rogue factors. A cross-section of the Party at this time would have shown a layer-cake effect: the Cabinet publicly supporting Thatcher, the back benches deeply split, the hard-core constituency workers very pro-Thatcher, the soft core much less committed. If you were an M.P. in a marginal constituency, Mrs. Thatcher might win you one solid vote from the electorate, while Mr. Heseltine might win you one and a half shaky ones. How to make the calculation? And how to explain it to your Thatcherite Party workers? Mr. Cyril Townsend, M.P. for Bexleyheath since 1974, decided to vote for Heseltine, though he knew that support among his own grass-roots organizers was running four to one in favor of Mrs. Thatcher. The chairman of the Bexleyheath Conservative Association took Townsend aside ten minutes before a meeting of the local executive committee and urged him to keep his mouth shut about his voting intentions. "His views," said the chairman, "went against those of the ward committees, ladies' clubs, luncheon and supper clubs, the businessmen, the local council, and all but one senior member of the executive." Mr. Townsend declined to keep his mouth shut; worse, he appealed over the heads of the luncheon and supper clubs, the ladies' clubs, and the businessmen. "I believe I have the support of the majority of people who voted for me," he declared as he endorsed Mr. Heseltine. The vice-chairman of his own organization responded by demanding a new Parliamentary candidate: "I am asking [the chairman] to set the process in motion. Candidates will come forward and one of them will be Cyril Townsend. I hope he loses."



The first ballot was held on Tuesday, November 20th, and the result was perfect for the Labour Party—what Tory managers had called "the nightmare scenario": Thatcher 204 votes, Heseltine 152, abstentions 16. So although the Prime Minister had won a straight race by fifty-two clear votes, she had failed by four to obtain the fifteen per cent over and above a clear majority which the rules demanded. (At this point, people started asking who had invented such batty rules. The answer turned out to be a former Conservative M.P., Humphry Berkeley, who had been asked to devise new rules in late 1964 by the then Tory leader, Sir Alec Douglas-Home. Berkeley subsequently deserted the Tories for Labour, deserted Labour for the S.D.P., and deserted the S.D.P. for Labour again. Such a career perhaps helps explain the tortuous rules he invented.) The result meant that Mrs. Thatcher was wounded, but not mortally; that Mr. Heseltine had shown himself a more serious contender than had been imagined; and that another gruelling round of campaigning was to come. The former Tory Party chairman and loyal Thatcherite Cecil Parkinson immediately called the result "as bad as it could be for the Party as a whole."

Mrs. Thatcher promptly made it worse. Before the election, she had let it be known that she would fight to the last in defense of her Premiership, that victory by even the smallest margin was

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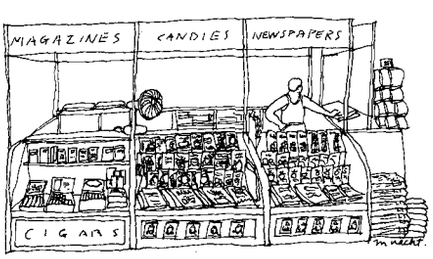
still victory. This was widely taken to be a rhetorical declaration: a bad result for Mrs. Thatcher and she would make way for a Thatcherite successor in the second round—whether a calmingly paternal figure like Douglas Hurd, her thriller-writing Foreign Secretary, or one of the next generation, like her Chancellor of the Exchequer, John Major. But what was a bad result for Mrs. Thatcher? The BBC's political editor, John Cole, estimated that two hundred and ten was the lowest acceptable vote, while two hundred or under was "unacceptable." It was at 6:34 P.M. that the news came through that Mrs. Thatcher had received two hundred and four votes. Clearly, the pundits agreed, this would mean an evening on the telephone—advice from "the men in suits," as senior Party figures are picturesquely termed. She would sleep on the result and announce her decision in the fullness of time. The BBC's chief Parliamentary correspondent, standing in front of the British Embassy residence in Paris, where Mrs. Thatcher was staying, assured viewers that nothing much was likely to happen for a while, and prepared to sign off. But Mrs. Thatcher is, as has been repeated many times, a "conviction politician," and one of her convictions has always been that she is the best person to lead the Conservative Party. At 6:36 P.M., just as the correspondent in Paris was about to return viewers to London, there was a scurry of activity over his right shoulder. Mrs. Thatcher, having thought over her predicament for a full ninety seconds, came roaring down the residence steps and fell upon the waiting journalists like a wolf on the fold. She had clearly won the first round; therefore, she would allow her name to go forward to the second ballot. Once more, the Prime Minister had plunged the nation into certainty. She had also killed off the possibility that Mr. Hurd or Mr. Major would come in as a compromise Thatcherite candidate on the second round. One of the more pathetic sights of the evening was that of Mr. Hurd later trooping out of the Embassy residence to record his continuing loyalty to his leader. It took him forty minutes to make this appearance, and it was one of the shorter declarations of obeisance on record, occupying a full twenty-three seconds.

Perhaps this exorbitant display of Thatcherian self-certainty, and her snubbingly public contempt for advice—even for the niceties of appearing to seek advice—stiffened the resistance of Cabinet ministers and the men in suits. (There is, naturally, some crossover between the two categories.) The next day, November 21st, she returned to London, replaced her campaign manager, declared, "I fight on, I fight to win," and summoned her Cabinet one by one to listen to what seemed distinctly post-hoc consultations. Most of her ministers said they would continue to support her in the second round of voting. Many added, however, that they thought she would lose; some expressed fear that she might be humiliated. At seven-thirty the next morning, this time having slept on it, Mrs. Thatcher told her private office that she had decided to resign. The Cabinet was summoned for nine o'clock, an hour earlier than usual, and shortly afterward the country heard that the longest Premiership since 1827 would be over within a week. Once again, Douglas Hurd was sent into a scuttle, for second-round nominations (accompanied by the names of proposer and seconder) had to be in by midday. The Chancellor, John Major, also scuttled, while Mrs. Thatcher set off to break the news officially to the Queen. The Prime Minister's widely reported comment on the fact that she could be deposed after winning three general elections, never losing a confidence motion in the House, and manifestly defeating her main challenger was couched with a homeliness appropriate to the tabloid headline it soon became: "WHAT A FUNNY OLD WORLD IT IS." Kenneth Baker, the Tory Party chairman and a person of literary aspirations, reached stylistically somewhat higher, saying, "I do not believe we will see her like again"—though the resemblance between the departing leader and Hamlet's father was not immediately apparent. (Both poisoned by ambitious rivals?) Winston Churchill, M.P., in the House of Commons that afternoon, called her "the greatest peacetime Prime Minister this country has ever had," carefully reserving the wider title for his own grandfather.



The second round of the election was fought in an overtly correct fashion, as if in deliberate defiance of the Thatcher manner. It was that curious thing, a healing battle. A small amount of mileage was made out of the candidates' social origins, though, this being the modern Conservative Party, it was along the lines of "prolier than thou." (Mr. Major, it turned out, had left school at sixteen and worked on a building site. This gave him the drop on Mr. Hurd, who had been burdened with a thorough education and a father who had been an M.P. before him. Hurd was driven by the handicap of privilege into some awkward son-of-the-soil reminiscences about planting potatoes as a boy.) No scandal was mooted, though the press enjoyed disinterring Mr. Hurd's out-of-print thrillers and quoting all the descriptions of breasts they could find in them. (The Hurd camp at once ascribed these passages to their boss's co-author.) But the main sounds heard during the campaign were of eerie concord. Each candidate was eager to unite the Party; each claimed support from left, right, and center; each admired the other's achievements; each was keen on Europe—or, at least, keener than Mrs. Thatcher, whose negative image and opinions hung over the contest. Each was committed to a review of the poll tax, though here there was a slight difference, for once prettily mocked by Neil Kinnock: "When it comes to the poll tax, the choice is between Heseltine, who knows there is a problem and doesn't really know what to do about it; Major, who knows there is a problem and doesn't really want to do anything about it; and Hurd, who has only just found out there's a problem."

THE contest was fought in a gentlemanly fashion—except, of course, by the Lady herself. What would Mrs. Thatcher do? Well, it was generally agreed that, having retired from the election, she would do her best to assist the search for Tory unity by not interfering too much, though she might perhaps allow it to be gently intuited which way she was going to vote. But allowing things to be gently intuited has never been Mrs. Thatcher's style. It soon became known that she would be voting for Major; and it was even suggested that

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if Heseltine won she would resign her seat in the House of Commons and force a by-election in her constituency of Finchley. (This was one of those "damaging but deniable" rumors, which came with the qualification that she might, of course, have been merely speaking in the heat of the moment.) The day before the second round, she was on the telephone actively arm-twisting for Major. And, being Mrs. Thatcher, of course, she went too far. Her farewell speech to Conservative Central Office, which, not surprisingly, was recorded by someone present and leaked to the press, contained praise for both President Bush and herself over the Gulf: "He won't falter, and I shan't falter. It's just that I shan't be pulling the levers there. But I shall be a very good back-seat driver." Thatcher might have gone, but Thatcherism would continue, she was instructing the candidates. Anyone would have thought she had just read the Encyclopædia Britannica entry for the second Earl of Liverpool, whose length of Premiership she would never now exceed: "Lord Liverpool was destitute of wide sympathies and of true political insight, and his resignation of office was followed almost immediately by the complete and permanent reversal of his domestic policy." None of that for Mrs. Thatcher: the rebels might have pushed her out of the driver's seat and seized the wheel, but she had crawled along the running board and climbed back in behind them.

The second campaign was marked by slightly nervous, negative speculation. Sir Geoffrey Howe (now "the Assassin" to Tory loyalists) endorsed Heseltine, just as Mrs. Thatcher endorsed Major. How welcome was either kiss? Conservative M.P.s declared themselves "the most sophisticated electorate in the world," which meant mainly that some of them lied to the press, some to the men in suits, some to the three candidates, and most to their own constituency organizations. At the local level, the removal of Mrs. Thatcher was widely regarded as akin to treason, and a vote for Heseltine as an endorsement of murder. Would a sense of shame at the murky deed lead M.P.s to favor her nominee, Mr. Major? Was Heseltine too risky? Was Hurd, lauded as the "safe pair of hands," too fogeyish? Was Major, at forty-seven, too young? And not just young in experience: what if he lasted as long as She had done, and thus clogged up the normal processes of succession?

The three candidates had a long weekend to make their pitches: nominations had closed at midday on Thursday, the twenty-second, and voting opened on Tuesday, the twenty-seventh. Campaign managers looked under stones for hitherto disregarded M.P.s and tickled them behind the ears; senior Party figures came out with endorsements; constituency parties were consulted with trepidation. Mr. Heseltine had generously announced that as Prime Minister he would keep his rivals in the Cabinet in their present positions; the two others cannily made no promises to Mr. Heseltine. By the day of voting, it was clear that Mr. Heseltine's first-round surge was not continuing, that Mr. Hurd's wise-head, safe-hands appeal was limited, and that the only recognizable progress was being made by the least known, least experienced, least charismatic, and least characterizable figure of John Major. Over the weekend, the polls confirmed what they had said seven days earlier—that Mr. Heseltine would be capable of defeating Labour—but they menacingly added that Mr. Major would, too, and by a greater margin. Such brief opinion samplings ought to be easily discountable, but if the earlier poll had given Mr. Heseltine extra credibility, perhaps this would do the same for Mr. Major. Every little helps, particularly in the uncertain, slightly mesmerized condition the Conservative Party found itself in. They had killed the Wicked Witch and flung her onto the dung heap, but they still believed in magic. They were long familiar with the hex of Hez; maybe the featureless fellow they knew little about had some special juju they were as yet unaware of?

On the final Tuesday morning, Mr. Major opened a Japanese bank in the City, Mr. Hurd had a photo session with Alexander Dubček at the Foreign Office, and poor Mr. Heseltine went off to his publishing company. The results came through at about half past six that evening. For once, all three hundred and seventy-two Conservative M.P.s had managed to vote without spoiling even one ballot paper: a hundred and eighty-five for Major, a hundred and thirty-one for Heseltine, fifty-six for Hurd. Two kinds of gasp went up: one of surprise at the extent of Major's progress, and one of seething frustration at what the voting system had once again managed to achieve. If Mrs. Thatcher had been four votes short of accepted victory on the first ballot, Major was even closer: two short. So what did the rules, those blasted un-Conservative rules so many had fretted against, say now? They ordered a third ballot in two days' time, with both the trailing candidates instructed to soldier on whether they liked it or not. Whereupon two things happened. First, Heseltine and Hurd effectively conceded defeat by announcing that on the third ballot they would vote for Major; and shortly afterward the Tory back-bench 1922 Committee, which is in charge of running leadership elections, decided that the rule book they had been obliged to work with was a frightful piece of non-Tory hogwash—transferable votes? Who ever heard of such a thing? There would be no third ballot, and that was that. Who were they to be dictated to by some chappie who in any case had deserted the Party for the pinkos? (Mr. Humphry Berkeley's rules, it should be said in his defense, were designed for the more ruminative process of choosing a leader in peacetime, while the Party was out of power, rather than for ousting a sitting Premier. Mr. Berkeley himself had popped up on television after the first round to say yes, he thought his rules were working well, and no, he had no intention of rejoining the Conservative Party.)

SO a second man from the East Anglian county town of Huntingdon had been selected to govern the country—the previous one being Oliver Cromwell. And the country was left puzzling briefly over a small mystery: how Mrs. Thatcher, supported by two hundred and four Conservative M.P.s, was judged to have lost the Premiership, while Mr. Major, supported by only a hundred and eighty-five, was judged to have won it. Still, this was a time of freaks and records: the Tories, in deposing the longest-serving Prime Minister this century, had replaced her with the youngest Prime Minister this century. (The previous youngest was Lord Rosebery, who in 1894 had inherited power, as John Major did, from a formidable predecessor: Gladstone. Coincidentally, Rosebery was also a

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great admirer of Cromwell. Mr. Major would be advised not to hope for closer comparison with Rosebery's Premiership, which swiftly ran into trouble—Asquith said it was "ploughing the sands." Rosebery was out within sixteen months, defeated in the Commons on a vote over the supply and reserve of small-arms ammunition. Major himself has no more than eighteen months before he is obliged to call an election.)

The country also settled back to puzzle over a larger mystery: the nature of John Major, this man thrust so quickly into both the leadership and the Premiership, a man who in four days of campaigning achieved more than Michael Heseltine had done in five years of eating rubber-chicken dinners throughout the length of the country. What do we know about the sudden victor? He is, as his supporters told us perhaps too often during the election, "a man of the people." His father, who was called Abraham and was sixty-six when he begat John, was a music-hall and circus artiste, who, with his first wife, Kitty Drum, had an act called Drum & Major; later, he set up in business manufacturing garden ornaments, including gnomes. John's schooling ended at sixteen; he worked as a navvy, spent nine months on the dole, and then applied to become a bus conductor. "There were three of us," he recalled when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, "and there was an arithmetic test, then they tried us out with these machines to see how good we were, and I wasn't the best at that." (It is interesting to note how irrelevant academic qualifications have become to obtaining the highest office. The current leaders of the two main political parties have, between them, the combined achievement of a single pass degree, received at the second attempt, from the University of Wales. Is this bracingly meritocratic, dismally anti-intellectual, or just hazard?) Mr. Major, who had also dreamed of becoming a professional cricketer, joined an insurance company, then went into the Standard Chartered Bank. Local politics in South London led to national politics, a seat in Parliament in 1979, work in the Whips' Office, junior postings, an unhappy three months as Foreign Secretary, then a year at the Exchequer. He is said to be on the right of the Party in economics, on the left in social policy, central on Europe, and pretty much God knows where on the world outside. Everyone who has worked with him has described him—*so far, at least*—as decent, honest, able, and hardworking; the word "flair" is rarely mentioned. His first move in forming his Cabinet was shrewd enough: he appointed Michael Heseltine his Minister of the Environment, thus making the principal Tory critic of the poll tax responsible for sorting it out and saving the Government's neck. (Within days of Tarzan's return, an unemployed Lincolnshire builder became the first person to be jailed for refusing to pay the poll tax; with perfect appropriateness, the case happened in Grantham, a town famous mainly for being the birthplace of Margaret Thatcher.) Major's second move was less shrewd: having announced a Cabinet "of all the talents," he forgot to put in a single woman.

Skeptics, of course, suggested that there was one there already: Mrs. Thatcher's ghost would haunt No. 10, and her disembodied voice speak from the back seat of John Major's car. Certainly, and inevitably, in the frenzied second half of November, 1990, his accession was eclipsed by her departure. How do politicians leave office? Broken in spirit? Sadder but wiser? Quietly proud? Anxious about the Verdict of History? Mrs. Thatcher, who after all had been dismissed from the highest public office by her own closest supporters and in full public view, left not just bullishly but in a mood of rampant self-congratulation. She took History by the lapels and slapped it around the face in case it was planning to give her less than her due. Speaking to Tory Party Central Office workers, she commented on how other European leaders were "quite grief-stricken" at her departure (which must be one of the drollest misconceptions of the last decade). Standing outside No. 10 Downing Street while the moving van headed for the South London suburb of Dulwich, she bade the public temporary farewell, reverting once more to the royal "we"—an increasing tendency in her latter years. "We are very happy," she said, "that we leave the United Kingdom in a very, very much better state than when we came here." It was breathtaking, quasi-regal, and also reminiscent of those discreet plaques in French water closets which beg you to leave the place on departure as clean as you would hope to find it on arrival.

She left, and all the main players could reflect that they had achieved something. Mr. Howe had gained the removal of Mrs. Thatcher; Mrs. Thatcher the succession she favored; Mr. Major the keys to No. 10; Mr. Heseltine a seat in the Cabinet and his own political rehabilitation. And Mr. Hurd? Even Mr. Hurd could joke that at least he'd got a good plot for a novel out of the previous fortnight's events. Other commentators reckoned the affair more than just the stuff of fiction. The word "tragedy" was frequently invoked, especially with reference to "Julius Caesar," while the esteemed journalist Peter Jenkins, of the *Independent*, claimed to have observed a "tragic drama" rooted in Mrs. Thatcher's "Nietzschean will." But it's hardly likely that future tragedians scouring the twentieth century for material will fall delightedly upon the events of November, 1990. Of course, they were richly exciting, and it is arguable that Mrs. Thatcher's inflexible sense of purpose and rightness, so much her strength when she was climbing to power and clamping herself there, became the weakness that helped her lose that power. But there was no great fall, as was demonstrated by the former Prime Minister's appearance in the Commons the very afternoon of her resignation. Here was no riven character; she was infrangible, buoyant, even jolly. And it's hard to talk of tragedy when the estimated price of the victim's memoirs is nine million pounds and her husband has been rewarded with the hereditary title of baronet. So, at most, we had witnessed an absorbing drama, in which a democratically elected leader of the Conservative Party was democratically rejected by the same party, which decided that although she had won three general elections, her chances of winning a fourth were markedly slimmer than those of someone else.

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And should we even be quite so certain of the pattern of events which apparently led so inescapably to this conclusion? When Mr. Heseltine walked out of the Cabinet in 1986, was it a decision of high principle or merely a resignation waiting to happen? When the Biting Doormat nipped the ankles of the Lady of the House, was it on a new matter of major importance, some unprecedented aspect of Thatcherian behavior, or just a weary sense that even downtrodden bristles can take only so much? And when the Conservative Party finally gave the Prime Minister too exiguous a majority for her own survival, were they censuring her style of leadership (which had brought them so much), or declaring that her stance on Europe was henceforth unacceptable, or worrying about the poll tax? It suits us to identify specific reasons, to play the game of if-only-she-hadn't-done-this, but perhaps what occurred was less close to Shakespeare and Nietzsche than it was to a marriage that runs out of steam and hits the divorce court. There the couple seek the reasons that explain their legal requests, and these reasons have to be couched in a way that the court understands: look how he knocked me about, see how she neglected the kids. But sometimes there are no reasons except that one partner doesn't want to live with the other anymore and doesn't see why he or she should. "Europe" was partly the cause of Mr. Heseltine's resignation, and of Sir Geoffrey Howe's resignation, and of Mrs. Thatcher's unacceptability. But one of the most perceptive, if least dramatic, views of her departure was offered by the Honourable William Waldegrave, whom Mrs. Thatcher had recently appointed Minister of Health. Did she have to go because of Europe? He replied, "Apart from two small groups, one of federalists, and one of anti-Europeans, it's very difficult to get the Conservative Party to argue over Europe. It was more a feeling that time passes, and eleven and a half years was enough." The divorce had its acrimonious moments, but the Conservative Party retains some gentlemanly instincts, and the couple will go on seeing quite a lot of one another despite the decree absolute. In fact, you could say they're getting on rather better now that they've divorced than they did in the last few years of their marriage.

—JULIAN BARNES

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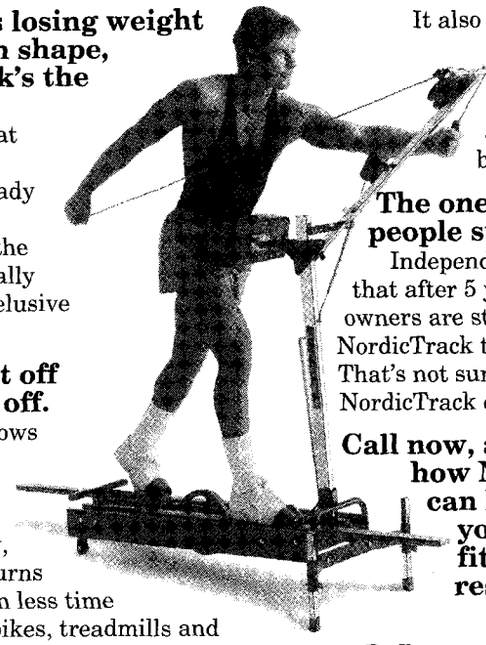

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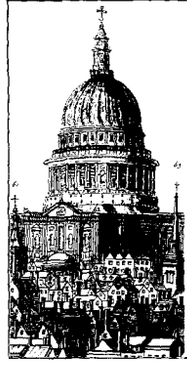

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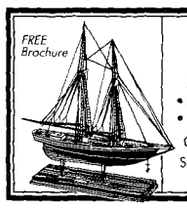

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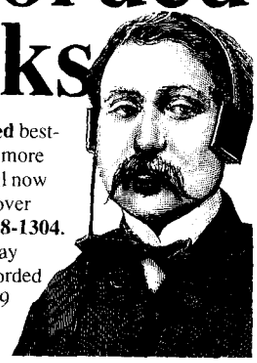

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BY tradition, New York's mayor invites local political reporters to a holiday party each December at Gracie Mansion, the mayor's house, which was built in 1799 as part of a gentleman's farm along the East River and stands at what is now East Eighty-eighth Street. Its attractions as a residence—the widow's walk, the old-fashioned veranda overlooking a lawn that slopes down to the water, and the lights of the East River bridges glittering in the distance—are so compelling that when the city's former mayor, Edward Koch, mentioned at the 1987 Christmas party for reporters that in 1989 he would be a candidate for reëlection to what would have been an unprecedented fourth term, he put it this way: "I have no intention of giving up this house." Last month, David Dinkins, the mansion's latest squire, who, despite Koch's intention, was sworn in on January 1st a year ago, followed the tradition of inviting reporters in, which surprised some of those who have been covering him. In his year as mayor, Dinkins, unlike his predecessors, has hardly ever met with members of the press in his cozy City Hall office, with its large photographs of Paul Robeson and Nelson Mandela (the portrait of Fiorello LaGuardia, the city's first Italian-American mayor, which had hung there, mayor in and mayor out, for over two decades, was moved into a nearby corridor), opting instead for more formal sessions in the much larger Blue Room, across the hall. The impromptu press conferences beside the old-fashioned round radiator in City Hall's rotunda that Koch favored at least once a day were tried a few times by Dinkins and then abandoned. He has made it clear that he regards meeting with reporters as among the most distasteful of his mayoral chores. Others of his constituents find him to be the soul of courtesy (if occasionally a bit late for appointments), but his staff often summons City Hall reporters from Room 9—the pressroom, on the other side of the rotunda—to news conferences for which he then appears, usually without apology, as much as an hour later. His tight-lipped responses during the Q. and A. sessions that follow are so noncommittal as to make the trip across the rotunda often seem to have been hardly worthwhile.

Inevitably, the new mayor's performance causes some on the scene to compare him with Koch, who could hardly get through a day without letting loose some outrageous remark that would turn into an instant headline ("WACKO!" "THE PITS"), although his attacks rarely had municipal-government relevance or signified anything except that Koch was carrying on again. For a time this year, Dinkins' frequent-flier habit of being on the go around the country—anywhere, it seemed, except at City Hall—brought to mind Mayor Jimmy Walker (1926-1932), who, according to legend, stopped by the local seat of government only when he had nothing more interesting to do or, on occasion, to pick up his mail. In recent months, although Dinkins' taste for tourism has continued (he's been to Washington, Berkeley, Houston, and Hilton Head, South Carolina, for instance), the comparison has more often been with Mayor Abraham Beame (1974-77), another eminently polite and self-contained sort. This invocation has been especially unwelcome at the Dinkins end of City Hall, since Beame is inextricably associated with New York's mid-seventies fiscal crisis, in which the local financial situation so deteriorated—far more, the hope is, than it will in 1991, though the announced budget deficits grow increasingly ominous—that the direction of the city was largely taken over by Governor Hugh Carey and a State Emergency Financial Control Board, leaving the Mayor as a dim, if ever-polite, ceremonial figure.

The unaffable relations between Dinkins and the press, which were highly evident as the date of the annual Christmas party approached, could not be attributed entirely, despite speculation by some outside gossips, to his press secretary, Albert Scardino, although it was widely agreed that Scardino, a former *Times* reporter, had done the Mayor no favors by "running the Blue Room as if it was the bridge on the U.S.S. Caine," as the *Downtown Express*, a local weekly, put it last month. Scardino, a bow-tie-wearing native of Georgia, where he lived and worked until 1985, told reporters that he had never been in City Hall before he

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was named press secretary. Several members of Dinkins' campaign staff, especially Harold Ickes, the campaign counsel, had persuaded the Mayor that he would be ideal for the press secretary's job. From the early weeks of his tenure, headlines have regularly reported that Scardino is on his way out, but their very frequency may insure his survival in the press office, or in some other high-level post, the Mayor being a stubborn man. In fact, Scardino's chances of remaining on the scene were assumed to have improved after Koch announced that he should be fired. This judgment was issued before the publication of a *Vanity Fair* article in which Scardino (who is white) was quoted as telling the writer, Marie Brenner, that white New Yorkers think of blacks as felons or maids and "don't understand that . . . City Hall is no longer run by a bunch of tired old Jewish men."

Like quite a few other politicians, the Mayor obviously finds it hard to forgive reporters whose news stories, instead of reflecting his administration's achievements as described in its press releases, introduce additional, not necessarily corroborative facts that, as he sees it, perversely dwell on the negative. When a poll published in *Newsday* last September 28th showed that in three months the approval rating among New Yorkers for his performance as mayor had fallen from fifty-three per cent to thirty-eight, he blamed what he called press "hysteria" —a reference to big headlines in the previous weeks about crime in the city. Most memorable had been the headlines reporting the killing by random gunfire within just a few weeks of half a dozen small children, in some cases sleeping in their cribs or in the family car. The fact that all these children were black or Hispanic seemed to contradict the Mayor's complaint to black reporters a few weeks later that whites—the local political press is still heavily white—were not concerned about crime until it affected white people (an observation that, like Scardino's, hardly fit in with Dinkins' campaign for racial harmony in the city). Another reason the Mayor gave for his fall in the polls was the difference in local press coverage of crime during his months in office and during the Koch years, when, he told reporters, the media did not refer to a crime wave—even though the total number of homicides in 1989 was a thousand nine hundred and five, a record. (It would not be helpful to him to dwell on comparative numbers now: in early December, homicides in the city for the year passed the two-thousand mark, for the first time in its history.) The September *Newsday* poll showed that while Dinkins' popularity had fallen sharply among Hispanics and, especially, among whites, it had held steady among African-Americans, who, as Dinkins commented, "seem more willing to give me a chance." A black reporter remarked that after moving around in black communities he thought people there were just as upset about crime as whites but were too loyal to the city's first black mayor to say so to a pollster. In fact, blacks had told the *Newsday* polltaker that crime had gone *down* in their neighborhoods. On December 19th, *Newsday* published another poll, showing the Mayor with a thirty-three-per-cent approval rating, for which the front-page headline was "DINKINS ON THE SKIDS." Although blacks were still by far his strongest supporters, his popularity even among them had gone down since September by eleven points, to sixty-five per cent. This time, the percentages of blacks and whites who said that crime was the most important problem facing New Yorkers today were almost identical.

DESPITE all qualms, the Mayor's holiday party for reporters went well. Dinkins and his wife, Joyce, played the perfect hosts; indeed, Dinkins spent so much time talking with animation and good humor to the wives, husbands, and other guests who attended the party with reporters that one could imagine numerous disputes on the way home over whether this could be the same tiresome, always late, cold-eyed man the reporters had complained of having to deal with day after day. After dinner, Dinkins led a standing ovation for Owen Fitzgerald, who was retiring from the *Daily News* after twenty-three years. The guests then presented the Mayor with jokey gifts of the kind that might be given to the boss at any office party—a tooth-fairy bank, for instance, that he could dip into to repair the city's budget gap. Some of the jokey gifts were of the kind that, as at any office party, would not have been offered if everybody on hand hadn't been full of holiday spirit—and spirits. Having complained that the Mayor

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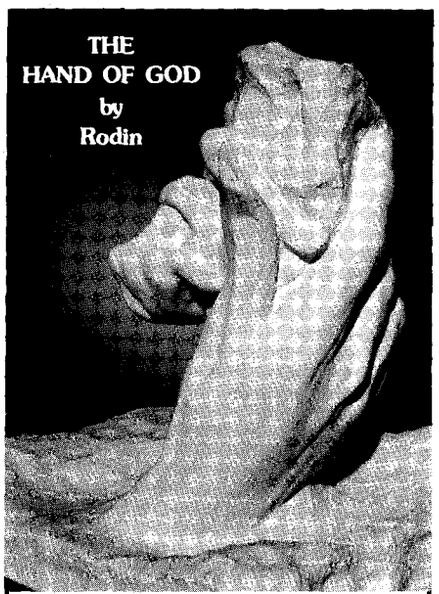

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was forever holding up events by taking several showers a day in his City Hall basement office, the reporters presented him with a cassette of water-play songs, including "Rubber Duckie." Among his presents was a book on woodworking, so that next time he could build his own headboard—a reference to a subject that would have caused him to bristle angrily a few weeks earlier: the eleven-thousand-five-hundred-dollar headboard built for the mayoral bedroom in the city's Human Resources Administration carpentry shop, whose main responsibility is helping make welfare clients' quarters more habitable. The Mayor accepted the book with a smile. Another gift was a Koosh Kin—one of those bright-colored rubber balls with thousands of rubber filaments radiating out from them. Each Koosh Kin comes equipped with a funny face and a designated name and personality. The Koosh Kin chosen as appropriate for the Mayor was named Grinby, who, according to the card attached to him, is "a Boy Scout type with courage, strength, loyalty, courtesy, and a small punctuality problem. Always the optimist, this happy hero loves to save the day, but you may have to wait until tomorrow."

There were no jokey gifts involving the Mayor's major passion, tennis, it now being accepted as a basic fact of mayoral life. Making fun of it would be like joking about George Bush's being a rich white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. At sixty-three, the Mayor plays tennis for between an hour and a half and two hours each morning before he gets down to the business of running the city, and he would undoubtedly be gratified by George Plimpton's proposition that the attributes essential to being a good athlete—such as a will to fight back and a sense of timing—are also the essentials of great leadership. He spent eight days, from the eighteenth through the twenty-sixth of November, at Hilton Head, devoting himself entirely to improving his tennis game. No local reporters accompanied him, for, even though headlines about the city's declining financial circumstances grew more insistent each day, he had made it clear that tennis would be his only concern. Going into lengthy athletic retreat was also risky because it left the local spotlight on the politicians most talked of as leading candidates to succeed him at City Hall, the assumption that he will be a one-term mayor now being widely held: Andrew Stein, the president of the City Council, who has already said that he will probably be a mayoral candidate in 1993; Peter Vallone, the speaker of the City Council; and Ruth Messinger, who took over Dinkins' former post as Manhattan borough president, and whom Koch has identified as the smartest and the most likely to succeed of the likely contenders, and also—because he considers her overly liberal—the most dangerous. "I consider her to be the Mme. Defarge of the Democratic Party," he said last month. The greatest risk that Dinkins took in being out of town so long was that the effect of his absence would be what in fact it was: it didn't seem to make a particle of difference. City government worked—or didn't work—as it did when he was in town and so often preoccupied with one ceremonial event or another.

The Mayor's break from City Hall responsibilities came even though his 1.8-billion-dollar plan to fight crime by hugely beefing up the criminal-justice system, especially the Police Department—the only major initiative of his administration so far—was due to come before a special session of the State Legislature, which had to pass the legislation that would allow the city to impose the taxes and other provisions to fund it. They included still another lottery (many of whose clients were likely to be poorer New Yorkers), which Jimmy Breslin labelled the "Special Anti-Crime Instant Scratch-Off Game." ("Scratch a number and catch a mugger!") An intense lobbying effort was required among the legislators, with whom Dinkins had not discussed the plan before offering it, but the Mayor, the frequent flier, didn't go to Albany to press the case. He kept saying that the legislators had no choice but to help him fund the program, because it was so worthy, adding, with his celebrated optimism, "It's an easy lift." In the end, the legislators found it easier to pay attention to several groups that were lobbying against the bills—including city employees, particularly firemen, who argued that it was unfair to set aside such large chunks of city revenues just for cops when, because of the budget crisis,

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thousands of other workers were about to be laid off—and, early on the morning of December 15th, they let the legislation die. Governor Mario Cuomo announced that on December 19th there would be a summit meeting of top city and state leaders to try to reach some agreement on the anti-crime bills, so that they might be passed at the regular session of the legislature this month. However, the gathering had to be called off, on the ground of poor timing: one of the principal summit figures, Melvin Miller, the Speaker of the Assembly and the second most powerful Democrat in state government after the Governor, was due to be arraigned in federal court the following day, on charges of mail fraud involving the bilking of private real-estate clients. For that matter, another summit principal, Manhattan State Senator Manfred Ohrenstein, who is the minority leader of the State Senate and the state's third most powerful Democrat, is about to go on trial for abuse of his office. Republican State Senator Guy Velella, of the Bronx, pointed out that three of the last four speakers of the State Assembly have been indicted. He might have quoted Russell Baker, who once suggested as the definition of a New York Democrat "a person under indictment"—except that one of the indicted speakers had been a Republican. So far, no one has proposed a Special Anti-Crime Instant Scratch-Off Game for the State Legislature.

At the Gracie Mansion party for reporters, there were no jokey gifts involving fancy mayoral clothes, although the Mayor's fondness for them, and especially for tuxedos, has been the subject of constant press commentary. He has said that the criticism reflects white people's belief that blacks should wear overalls instead of expensive clothes. At the party, however, it was the Mayor who, full of good cheer, mentioned fancy clothes, in his after-dinner speech. "Read my lips," he said. "No New Taxes." (Since he has four tuxedos, which are put to frequent use, one reporter suggested that he might have added, "Don't Need Any More/ Already Got Four.") Last fall, there was a move by some of the Mayor's advisers to have him get out among ordinary New Yorkers more, but there hasn't been much time for that. On the night after the reporters' party, for example—while the legislators were

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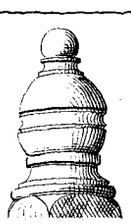

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arguing over whether to support the Mayor's anti-crime bills—Dinkins was invited to at least two formal events, one of them a dinner given by Patricia Kluge, whose husband, John Kluge (they are separated), is America's richest man. Mrs. Kluge kept a vacant seat for Dinkins beside her throughout the evening; the Mayor had chosen, instead, to attend Frank Sinatra's seventy-fifth-birthday celebration at the Waldorf. Dinkins is the first to say that this kind of thing is a very big thrill for the son of a barber and a domestic servant.

The Mayor's affable relationship with his reporter guests at Gracie Mansion that week was a reminder of the way things had been in the early days of his regime, when good will prevailed on all sides and the title chosen for the annual musical spoof of local politics put on each March by the Inner Circle, the alliance of present and former City Hall reporters, was a sunny "Have a Nice Dave." Unfortunately, the era of good feeling that flourished at the Christmas party did not last long. A few days later, Dinkins held a press conference at the entrance to the Queensboro Bridge, the closest of the East River bridges to Gracie Mansion, to celebrate the fact that rehabilitation work on the bridge was under way. Reporters, however, kept asking him about recent examinations of four of the city's bridges by state engineers showing that there were three hundred and fifty hazardous conditions on them, serious enough so that they might have to be closed. "For a change, why don't we look at a glass that's half full instead of half empty," the Mayor suggested angrily—although this did not seem too apt a metaphor: would it be looking on the bright side to say that half the city's bridges were safe to cross? When reporters' inquiries about the bridges' possible dangers persisted, Dinkins told them, "We called you here to show you a success story," and he stomped off to his waiting car. Numerous variations on tuxedo jokes had been proposed as the title for this year's Inner Circle show. The title that was finally chosen was "Empty Pockets, Empty Suits."

DINKINS' inauguration last January was a day of jubilation and hope for many New Yorkers, and even those who hadn't voted for him seemed ready to give the new mayor the benefit of every doubt. Nowadays, most city residents seem to be ready instead to doubt almost anything he does. The city employees' unions, early Dinkins supporters, who he had promised would have a friend in the mayor's office, held a rally in November in City Hall Park at which they waved signs that said "DINKINS TO WORKERS: DROP DEAD." Barry Feinstein, who is the head of Local 237 of the Teamsters Union, and a major spokesman for the hundred-and-fifty-thousand-member coalition of city employees currently bargaining for new contracts, described the Dinkins administration's labor negotiations as "the most inept in my thirty-three years of dealing with government." As the labor talks continued without progress, he began rumbling about taking "whatever action is necessary." When Feinstein mentions taking action, New Yorkers tend to pay attention. Nearly twenty years ago, when his union, which includes members who man the city's drawbridges, was angry over Albany's delay in approving a pension agreement, Feinstein decided to demonstrate that his people are workers to be reckoned with and, in the process, demonstrated to those who hadn't given the matter much thought that this city is not a solid geographic entity but a cluster of perilously attached islands. He arranged to have twenty-seven of the city's twenty-nine drawbridges locked in the upright position from the morning through the evening rush hours, turning local transportation into chaos.

Last winter, when the word "deliberate" was used to describe Dinkins' style, it was intended as a compliment, meaning that he is not a fellow who flies off the handle, like some other politicians. Now, more often than not, it is a synonym for laggard, particularly as applied to his appointments process, which proceeded so slowly that commissioners of major agencies—the four-billion-dollar-a-year Human Resources Administration, for example, which oversees the needs of the city's poor, with whom Dinkins had been expected to feel a special kinship—seem still to be engaged in on-the-job training, and many crucial appointments are unfilled. New Yorkers who were once strong Dinkins supporters have lately issued mea culpas for what they now see as their sins, and in some cases have described the man for whom they once had such hopes as "weak," "bum-

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bling," even "slippery." An air of depression hangs over discussions of what may happen to the government of the city under a mayor who may not be able to cope, and whose attention, in any event, often seems to be elsewhere.

Besides the Gracie Mansion Christmas party, another traditional event involving City Hall reporters is the end-of-the-year interview, in which the mayor elaborates upon his achievements during the previous twelve months while his guests try to work the discussion around to matters that did not turn out so well. Dinkins' session with newspaper, magazine, and wire-service reporters on December 21st—he was late, also a tradition—was the most sparsely attended such meeting in memory. Expectations that nothing newsworthy would come out of it were fulfilled. At one point, a reporter slumped so far down in his chair that Dinkins wondered aloud if he might have drifted off. In the view of some members of the press, the highlight of the session was the voice of Billie Holiday. While reporters refuelled their tape recorders, Dinkins put on a Holiday tape: "Gimme a Pigfoot and a Bottle of Beer"—a welcome distraction. During the forty-five-minute meeting, the Mayor cited one instance after another in which he had done the right thing, often against the advice of misguided counsellors. Although others argued otherwise, he said, he had predicted correctly that there would be a good reception for his "Stand Up for Racial Harmony" program, which, he said, had defused racial tensions in the city—although not many New Yorkers (and not even the Mayor) would confuse New York today with the peaceable kingdom. One local confrontation in which his actions have been widely criticized is the long-running boycott of two Korean markets in Brooklyn's Flatbush section by militant blacks, who drove away customers, at times shouting "Yellow monkeys!" and "Fortune cookies!" Although the store owners' lawyer got a court order requiring the demonstrators to stay at least fifty feet from the markets, the Dinkins administration declined to enforce it, until an appellate court explained, rather sternly, that complying with a court order is not optional. At the year-end interview, Dinkins told reporters that the dispute—which has intensified hostile relations between the city's blacks and Asians—had been handled correctly. Another matter for which he has been criticized is his failure to enforce the law against illegally striking correction officers last August, when they blockaded the bridge—still another bridge—between Queens and Rikers Island, where most of the city's twenty thousand prisoners are held. Their actions kept the corrections commissioner from driving into the prison to handle a melee among inmates and correction officers inside and prevented ambulances from getting through to treat those who had been injured. The Mayor said he would take the same action again in this case, also. Being sure of having done the right thing is, of course, nothing new among politicians, especially New York's mayors, who, in some respects, may resemble each other more closely than had been suspected. A few years back, at the annual Gracie Mansion press party, reporters gave Koch a mug bearing what they considered an appropriate message: "ONCE I THOUGHT I MADE A MISTAKE, BUT I WAS WRONG."

On the day after Christmas, Governor Cuomo delivered his first sharp criticism of Dinkins, his longtime political friend. Signing a bill, requested by City Hall, that will give local teachers a far larger wage increase than Cuomo and most fiscal monitors had said that the city could afford, the Governor described the city's finances as "running out of control" and said there was a danger that the city's finances—that is, essentially, its government—would have to be taken over by the State Financial Control Board (of which the Governor is the chairman), as they were in the great fiscal crisis of the mid-seventies. Dinkins' comment on Cuomo's expression of alarm was magisterial, if polite: "It doesn't please me." On the second floor of City Hall, above the rotunda, there are three rooms that in 1814 were designated collectively as the Governor's Room, so that New York governors would have a place to conduct business when they were in town. If the State Financial Control Board should have to take over, and the Governor should decide to put the room to use, City Hall could get to be quite a crowded place.

—ANDY LOGAN

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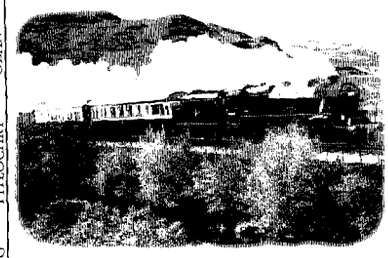
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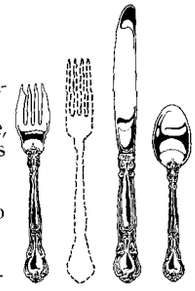
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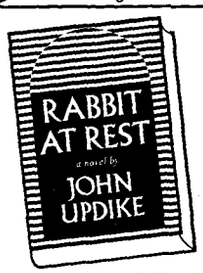

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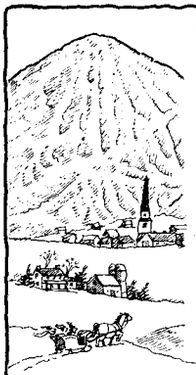

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BOOKS

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

I Lock My Door Upon Myself, by Joyce Carol Oates (Ecco; $15.95). Adulterous love in the far rural reaches, followed by a willed accident that grants the illicit lovers the opposite of their intended grand exit: a lifetime chained to the unloved partner, and a crippling. That's the plot of two novellas by two prolific American female writers. The first was "Ethan Frome," by Edith Wharton, and now Joyce Carol Oates has added a twist: one of the partners is black, and the other so mysterious she could be a changeling. Calla doesn't look like anyone in her family, and she doesn't feel much kinship with them, either, tramping the fields and sleeping anywhere rather than be with them, a habit she maintains after they marry her off at seventeen to a prosperous but repellent farmer. She bears him three children but experiences sexual awakening—it's as close as she ever seems to being fully awake—with a black water dowser no one, including her, knows anything about. Convinced that water can never harm him, the stranger takes her in a stolen rowboat over a waterfall. He is smashed and drowns; she is smashed and lives. By never coming close to her characters except in overheard sentences here and there that erupt in italics, Oates keeps this as smooth and lyrical and unfathomable as a river at full flood.

GENERAL

The Spiritual Life of Children, by Robert Coles (Houghton Mifflin; $22.95). The noted child psychiatrist, social researcher, and writer recalls that in his earlier investigations he found that children often spoke spontaneously of religion, but he didn't pursue the subject until Anna Freud suggested that he review the research he had accumulated over thirty years. Coles didn't just rework his old material. He undertook new interviews; sessions in which children drew; and group discussions on several continents, among children who were Christians, Jews, Muslims, Native Americans, and agnostics. Like adults, the children were seeking explanations of such ultimate questions as "Who made the world?" and "Why do we die?" Few accepted religion by rote; most made an intellectual effort to interpret the faith they had been taught and apply it to their own lives. Though far from uncritical, they were generous and tolerant, overflowing with desire for the good as they understood it. Perhaps children interested in religion constitute an exceptionally sensitive group; in any case, the moral attraction of Coles's subjects is irresistible.

America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink, by Kenneth M. Stampp (Oxford; $29.95). If the title promises a panoramic view, the subtitle comes closer to the book's focus, which is the approach of the Civil War. The struggle over whether Kansas would join the Union a free or a slave state dominated national politics in 1857, and so lies at the center of the book. But the Kansas story was not confined to 1857. To tell it, the author must resort to digressions and foreshadowings, and key elements of the tale—the Kansas-Nebraska Act, "Bleeding Kansas," John Brown's Pottawatomie massacre—are given cursory attention because they didn't happen during the book's titular year. Their place is taken by events of 1857—troubles between Mormons and "gentiles" in Utah, William Walker's filibustering in Nicaragua, the financial Panic. Although well told, these accounts seem, finally, beside the point. Mr. Stampp is a fine historian, and the Kansas saga is worthy of his talents; unfortunately, he has tried to fit it into a book that by design must leave it incomplete.

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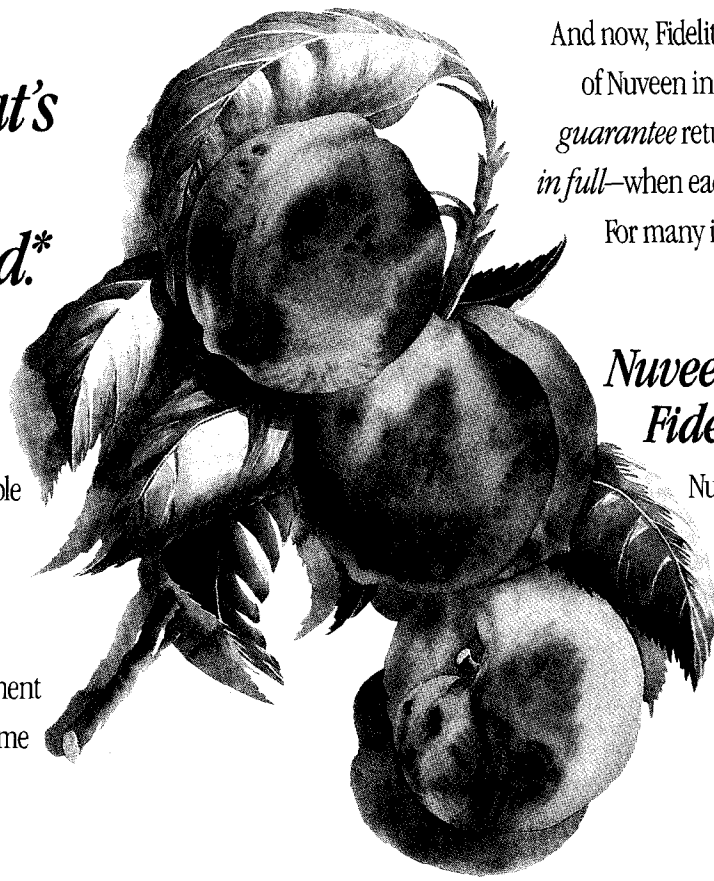

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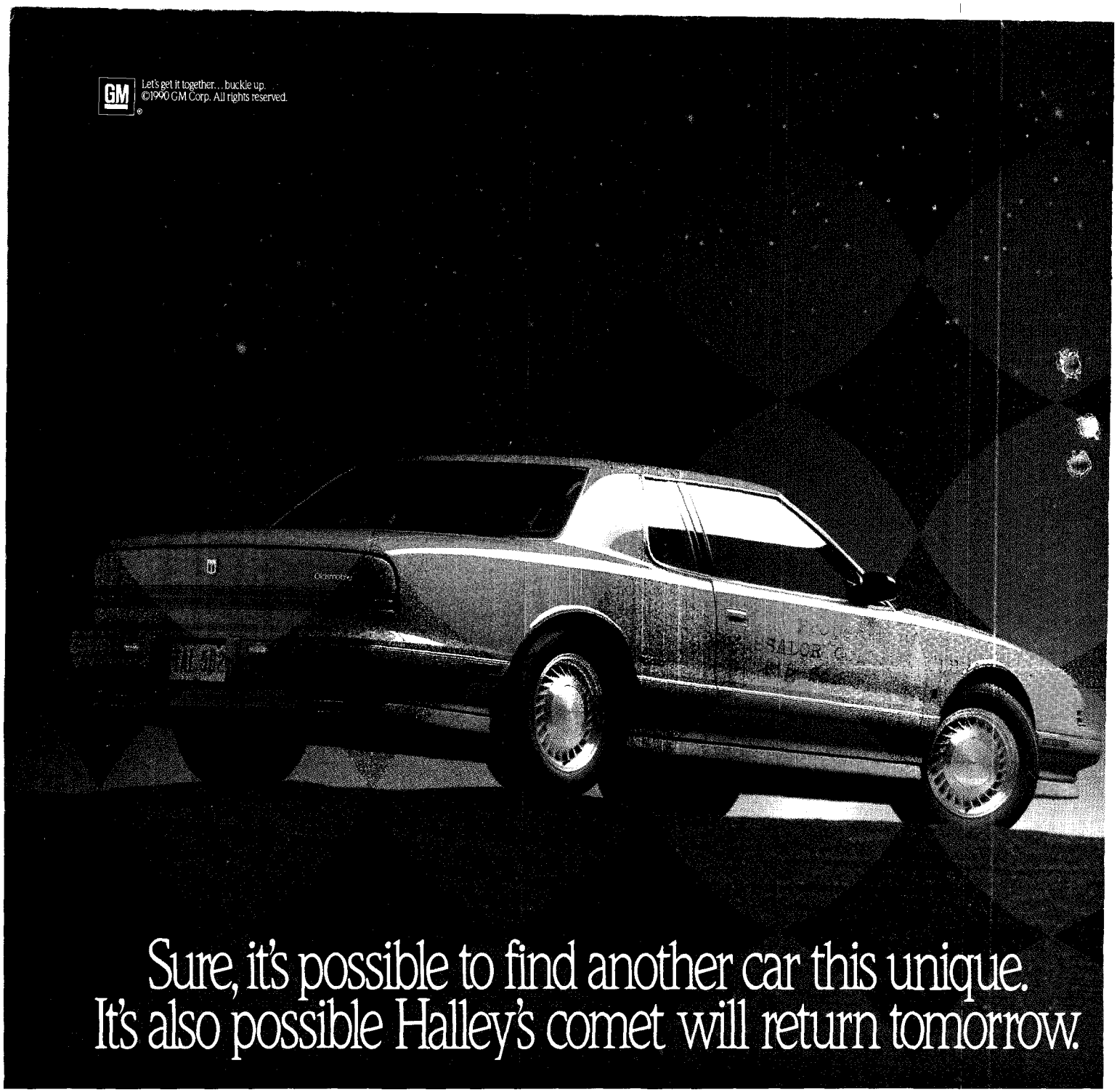

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